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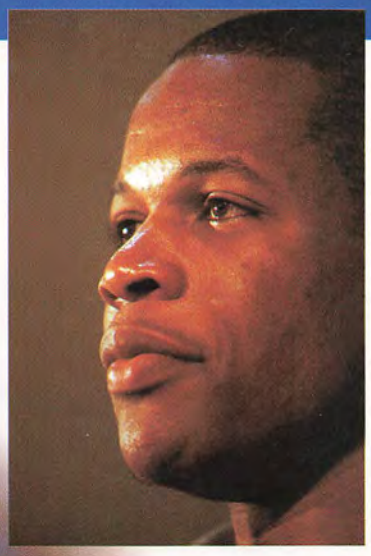

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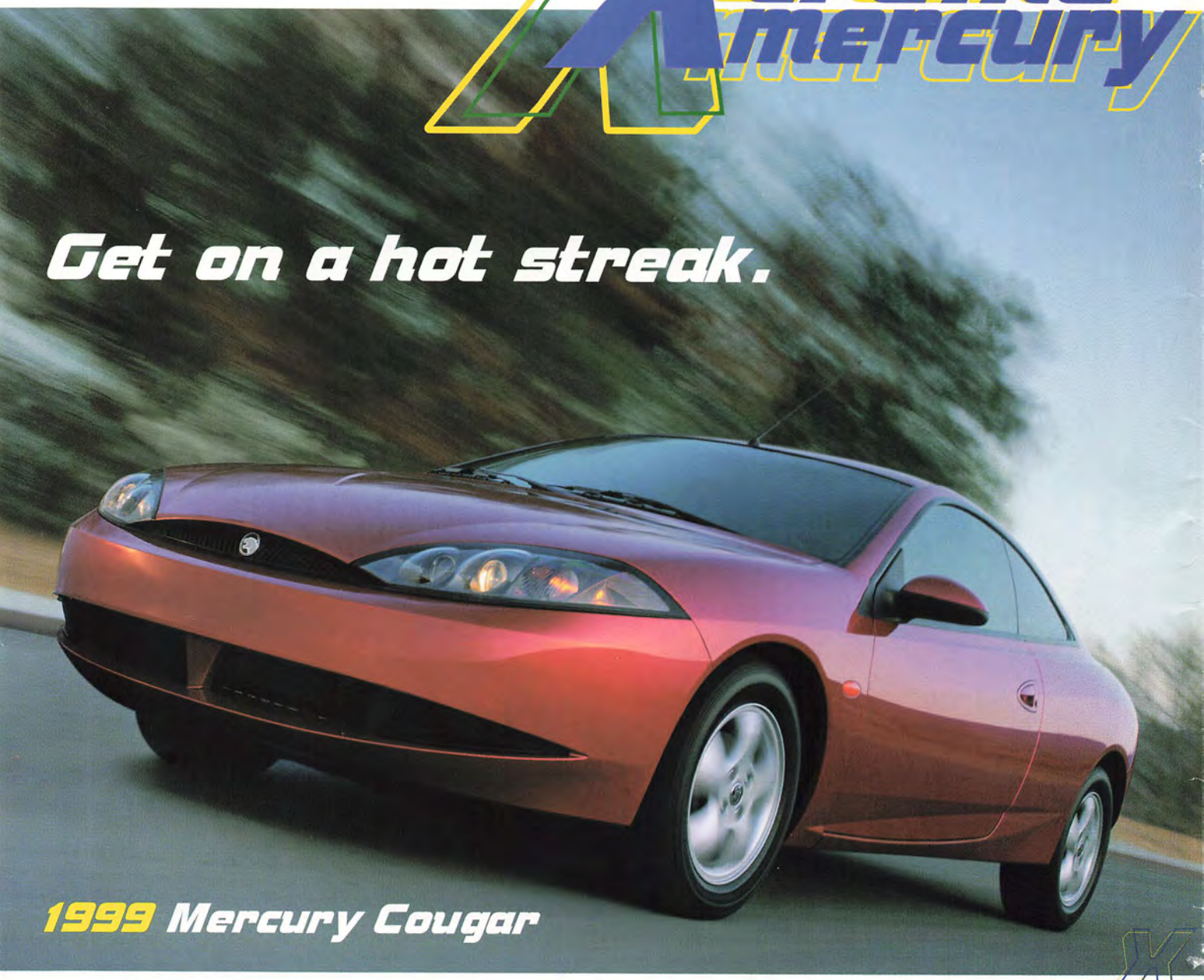

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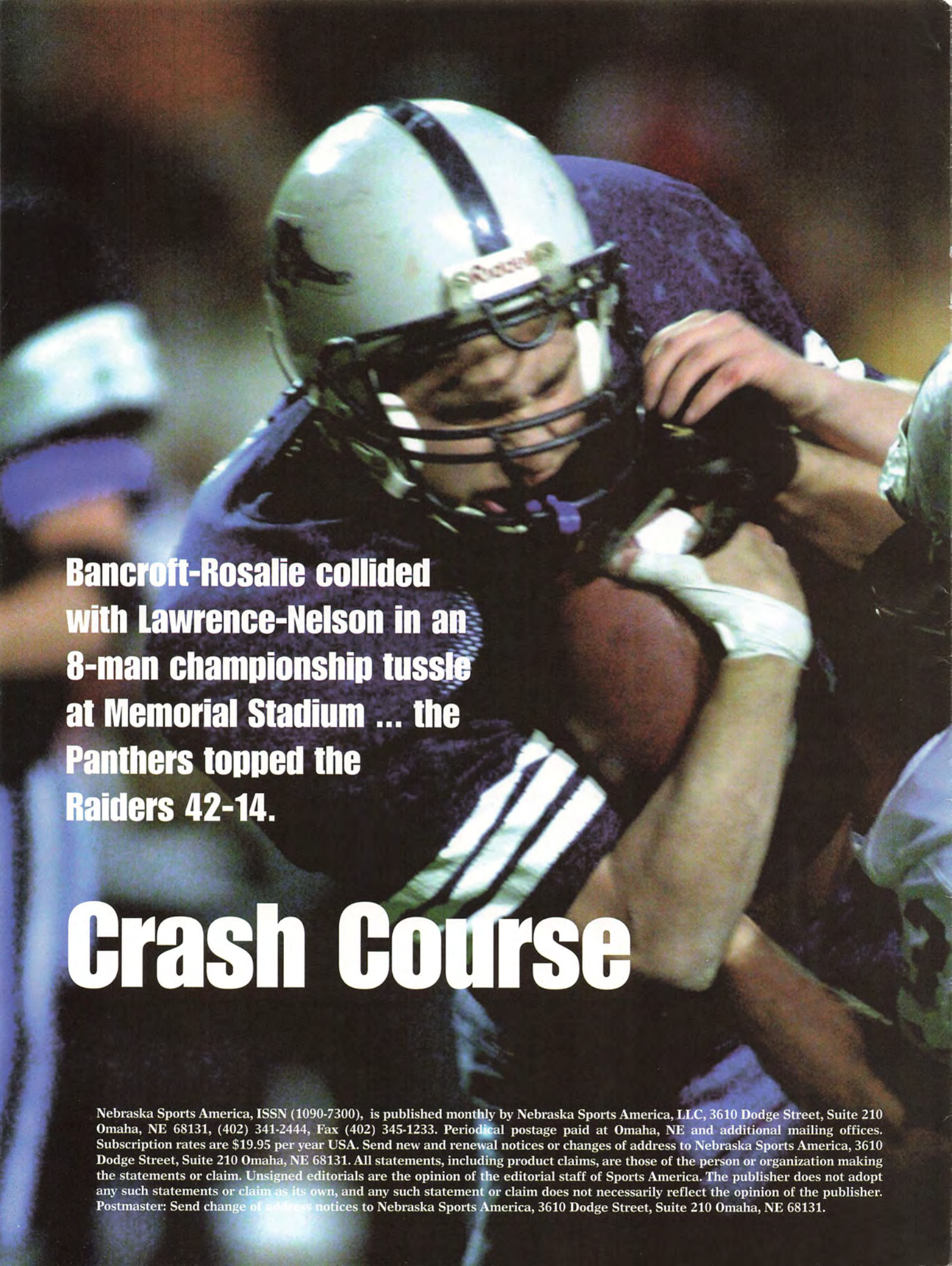

Bancroft-Rosalie collided with Lawrence-Nelson in an 8-man championship tussle at Memorial Stadium ... the Panthers topped the Raiders 42-14.

Crash Course

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PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

NEBRASKA SPORTS America

December 1999 • Volume 6 • No. 12

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On the Cover: Nebraska lineman Kyle Vanden Bosch; (inset) Creighton's Ben Walker. Photos by Eric Francis

LETTER from the editor

December is a very special time of year, and not just because I've started wearing thermal underwear again. It's a time to think of our fellow man. Of love, of peace. (Of how I'd love to have a piece of pizza...) It's time to count our blessings, to remember what we have.

For many of you, this includes the fact that long ago, when you were choosing your college football teams for life, you picked Nebraska. For some of you, this may not have been a choice. It was drummed into you from birth. Maybe you don't even really know all that much about football. You just know that at periodic intervals in your life you're supposed to yell out, "Go Big Red!"

That's OK. Be grateful. My point is that Nebraska football fans are among the luckiest people in the world. No Husker fan should ever be anything less than completely happy.

Lucky how? Well, for one thing, the Huskers always win. Always. Oh sure, they'll lose sometimes, like every couple of years or so. But think about it: Every single Saturday, Nebraska fans can feel good because their team won. This just isn't typical. You think that happens in Oklahoma? No. Texas? No. Colorado? No. Iowa? Oh, hell no. Last year, my team, the University of Hawaii, went 0-12. O-and-twelve? How'd you like to start your day off with that?!

Whereas, Nebraska fans get nine wins a year for 30 years. That's a lot of happiness that other people don't get to have. Your average Nebraska fan should have had at least four or five years' more happiness than your average person in a lifetime. It adds up.

And not only do they win all the time, it's easy to watch them doing it. Every game is on TV! I talked to people for the story in this month's issue about the Husker fans who watch every game from a bar in Seattle. And people have told me about Husker bars in Georgia. This happens all over the country. You can go anywhere in the United States and still not miss the Husker game. (Which, of course, they will win.)

Think Iowa State fans can catch the game on a business trip to Cleveland? Ha ha ha. Think I can follow UH football in Omaha? *Not* that I am bitter.

And speaking of that, the worst year that many Nebraska fans can remember was last season, when the Huskers had to (gasp!) actually stoop to play in the Holiday Bowl.

Terry Henion's buddy Ferd Lewis of the Honolulu Advertiser just came out with his list of the 10 greatest Hawaii wins of all time, and No. 1 was IN the Holiday Bowl when UH beat Illinois to finish in the Top 20 for the first and only time. (I'm not sure I agree ... I'm leaning toward when they snapped a 10-year losing streak to hated, bitter rival BYU, 56-14. Yes!)

UH won their conference and made it to a bowl game this year, too, for the second and third time ever, respectively. And so I'm going to walk around all December with a smile on my face. And you should too. The Huskers are in a big bowl, *again*. They'll be in the Top Ten, *again*. We should all be happy.

After all, just think. We could both be Iowa fans.

Kalani Simpson

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ATHLETE of the month

Jiles Hopes to Launch Northeast Rockets

To Vernon Jiles, there's an empty spot in the Lincoln Northeast High School trophy case where a state championship should be.

The Rockets' quest for five straight state titles was halted last spring in the semi-finals when Bellevue West upset Lincoln Northeast in two overtimes. The Thunderbirds then fell to Grand Island in the finals, while all Jiles and his teammates could do was watch. It was an awkward, unpleasant moment for a basketball dynasty. On the sidelines while basketball was still being played? That just wasn't right.

"I guess we're looking for some redemption this year," Jiles said. "We've got to get the championship back where it belongs, at Northeast."

The season hadn't even started yet, and the Rockets were already claiming ownership on the title. That's what it's like to play basketball for Lincoln Northeast. Every year they expect to win, and every year they win plenty.

"It's exciting, really," Jiles said of the winning tradition. "It's just a thrill coming through that competition and knowing you're the best in the state."

Northeast Coach Chip Bahe said that Jiles has quietly played a key part in Rocket basketball success in recent years.

"He's just a kid who's a heck of an athlete," Bahe said. "He's one of those guys with a big heart who does things from a team aspect."

Jiles has sacrificed individual stats for the good of the team, Bahe said, but could emerge as one of Nebraska's prominent players as a senior. "I think he's one of the best playmakers and guards in the state."

Jiles is planning the transition as well. He prides himself on being a student of the game, always looking to add a new facet or skill. Last season, he said, he realized he could become more than just a defender and passer. "You never get tired of learning when it comes to basketball," he said. "It's always a fun game to me." That's why with his newly minted skills he's hoping to add scoring to his game, become an all-purpose threat. It will help the Rockets, and he hopes, his future as well. Jiles' ultimate hope is to play Division I basketball.

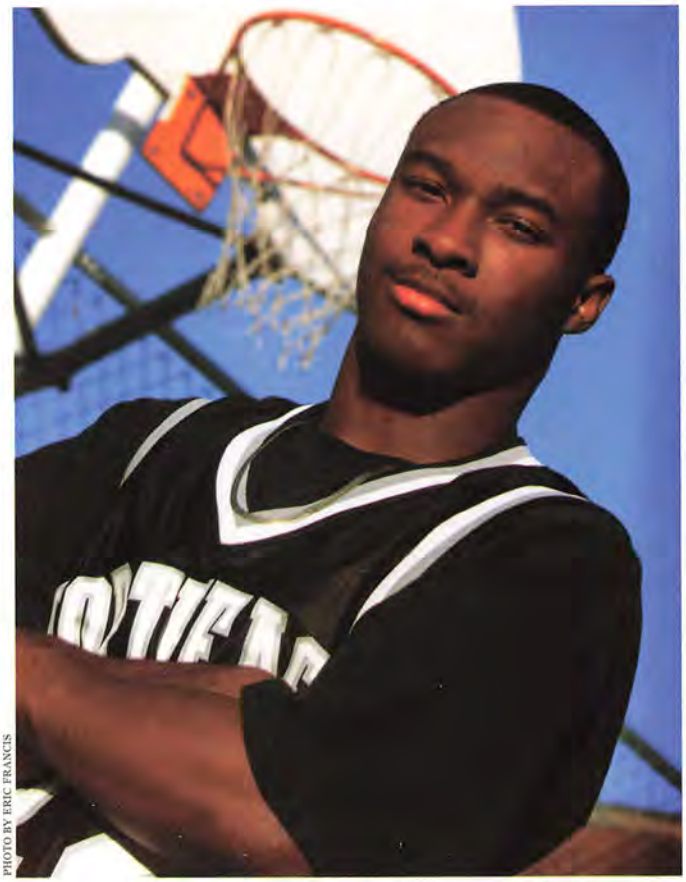
"I'm trying to go to college," he joked, "so I guess I've got to start being more selfish."

Long neglected in deference to others, his stats may go up in Jiles' senior season.

Bahe appreciates that his charge is constantly improving. Jiles plays football, basketball and runs track for Northeast, the coach pointed out, but works on hoops in the offseason on the Valentino's all-star squad. It pays off. "He really came on at the end of last season," Bahe said. He's hoping Jiles can pick up where he left off and help Northeast continue its winning ways.

Happy to oblige, Jiles said. "I've been waiting for this for a while now," he said of his senior hoops season. "I like playing other sports, but basketball is my first love and it always will be."

Spoken like a true Lincoln Northeast Rocket. ❖ NSA



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Jiles says the Rockets are back in black this season.

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BETWEEN the lines

BY JOHN KNICELY

A Standout Who Stands Above

As far as Kyle Bakker knows, there is nothing wrong with his personality.

In fact, he hadn't even thought about it until several professional baseball scouts dropped by his house with comprehensive questionnaires for the Millard West senior to fill out.

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANGS

Bakker is a top pitching prospect, but ball clubs these days measure more than a strong arm. They try to cover all the bases before investing a bundle on a high school standout.

And Bakker is a standout who dominated on the mound through the spring and summer seasons and was the leading scorer last year in basketball. He averaged more than 24 points a game in leading the Wildcats to the school's first ever State Tournament appearance.

Bakker is keen on competition, but realizes now he is short on the necessary patience required to answer profile questions for 90 minutes. He actually needed only about five seconds to give me the following self-assessment: "I expect a lot because God blessed me with a lot, so I work hard."

Opposing players will feel the brunt of that hard work this basketball season. Bakker added 20 pounds of muscle in the weight room this fall with two-a-day workouts.

Not only is Bakker a load at 6-foot-9, 255 pounds, he also can jump. His vertical measures 35 inches. Can he touch the top of the backboard? Bakker answers "I don't know, I've never tried."

Larry Bakker said his son always has been tall, noting Kyle was 23 1/2 inches at birth and 6-5 in the eighth grade. It's a mystery gene at work because the elder Bakker stands only 6-1 and his wife, Donita, measures 5-11.

In spite of the mismatch, father and son often square off for driveway hoops. The winner chooses the post-game snack and because Kyle prefers homemade malts, ice cream is a regular item on the shopping list.

Bakker has a voracious appetite for basketball even though his future lies in baseball. The State Tournament appearance last year was the appetizer and with four starters back for Millard West, a championship trophy is a realistic goal.

Coach Rick Hook said Bakker has the softest hands of any big man he's worked with over the past 22 years and is "nearly unstoppable in the low post." Bakker's excellent touch allows Hook the flexibility this season of moving his big man outside the paint as well.

Asked about deficiencies Hook said Bakker "can improve, but he's not deficient." More rebounds would be a plus, even though Bakker was impressive in averaging nine per game last season. On defense, he was intimidating, blocking four shots per contest.

It's his work on the pitching mound that Bakker said needs improvement.

He can blow it past the batter but he describes his curve ball as weak. It's too slow in Bakker's estimation.

Nevertheless, great potential is evident and college coaches also gave Bakker something to think about. A long list was narrowed down to Nebraska and Georgia Tech. The latter consideration because of coaches at the school who might be able to bump that curve to major league caliber.

Bakker said it was the hardest decision he ever had to make when he finally settled on Georgia Tech several days before the early signing date on Nov. 10.

A college education is most likely something Bakker will eventually pursue. His interest in the classroom leans toward biology and chemistry, and his 3.7 grade-point average indicates that his diligence extends beyond athletics.

If a professional baseball career comes first, Bakker said, that's fine. If not, he said, that's fine too. Right now the guy called "Bakes" by his friends wants to win basketball games and join his buddies for the weekly gatherings at a neighborhood restaurant to chew on chicken wings.

Next spring, when his basketball playing days end, Bakker will answer again to "Big Unit," a nickname that was originally bestowed on major league ace Randy Johnson. He happens to be Bakker's favorite player and with good reason. Johnson also towers above the mound and is known in baseball vernacular for throwing "hard cheese."

It kind of makes you wonder if the two share similar personalities as well. A number of professional baseball scouts can probably provide the answer. ❖ NSA

John Knicely is co-anchor at WOWT (Channel 6) in Omaha.

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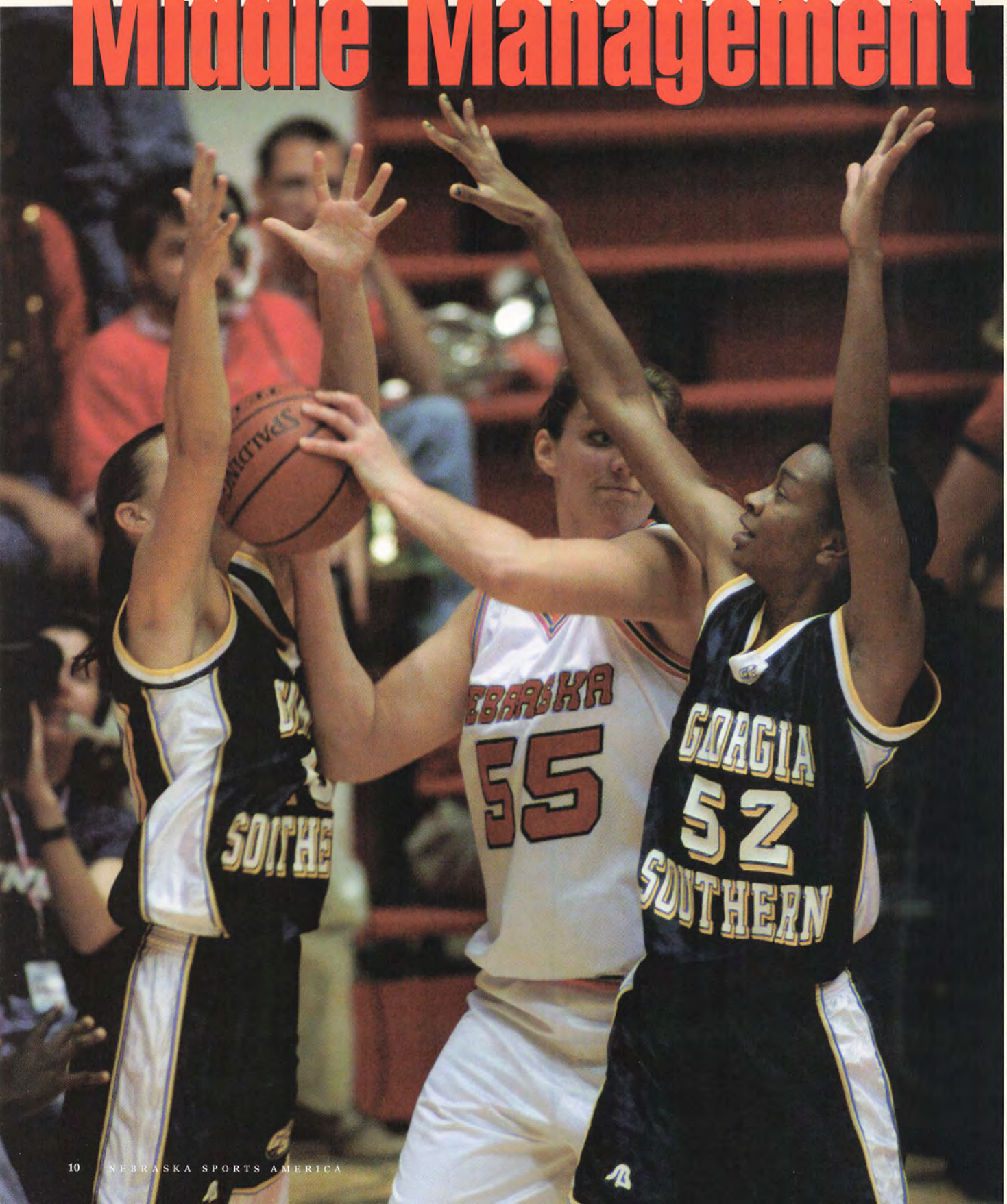

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

6-foot-5 Casey Leonhardt gives Paul Sanderford a true center and frees up the rest of the Huskers for a run-and-gun attack

Say this for Casey Leonhardt: she has personality.

A reporter, sitting courtside during Nebraska's preseason game against a Lithuanian team, suggests the perfect slant for a story: Count how many times she swears. At herself.

Leonhardt rolls her eyes at her mistakes. Tosses her head back in self-reproach. Seems to be muttering.

Is she talking to herself out there? There she goes again. That word.

The eyes roll again. "I'm not supposed to," she said. "I'm working on being more positive."

Too bad. That's part of the fun. Leonhardt is funny, ironic funny, fun to watch, fun to talk to. Besides, she's plenty positive when dealing with teammates. On the way to the free-throw line she seeks out one and points to add emphasis: "That," she said, meaning it, "was a good pass."

Later, Leonhardt calls out for defensive help on a cutter, and when it comes she responds with a simple, polite "Thank you."

But though she has instructions to keep her murmuring to a minimum, Coach Paul Sanderford's first priority with Leonhardt is not politeness. Not when you're playing Big 12 basketball out there. Not when you're 6-foot-5.

Oh, forgot to mention that? For Leonhardt, a vertical leap may sometimes mean getting on tiptoes, but it doesn't matter when you're 6-5. She can block shots without jumping. She can affect an offense just by showwing up. When Lithuania got loose on a 3-on-1 break in Leonhardt's first ever appearance in a Husker uniform at the Devaney Center, the Europeans took one look and dished the ball before even getting within 10 feet of her. They pulled up short, all three of them skidding like the Road Runner, and a shaky jumper rattled off the rim. Rebound, Huskers. The game didn't last much longer than that.

The shot blocker. Instant intimidation. Just add Casey.

Sanderford, having been to three Final Fours, knows a thing or two about winning basketball and he's been salivating ever since Leonhardt decided to transfer from Illinois two years ago. Now, she's finally here.

"Casey gives us that big, physical rebounder who can start the break with an outlet pass and then fill the lane," he said before the season started. A key piece to the system that worked so well for him at Western Kentucky. "She also gives us that dominant shot-blocking ability you need at the back of the press."

With Leonhardt in the middle, the Huskers, with athletes such as Nicole Kubik and Brooke Schwartz and a tenacious freshman class, will run. Just the way "the big man," as Leonhardt calls Sanderford, likes it. Nebraska may even throw in Amanda Went, go with a three-guard offense, secure in the knowledge that the middle is secure, and spread the court.

Leonhardt also apparently gives Nebraska two players for the price of one, as her presence frees up Charlie Rogers, who had previously been the Huskers' pivot, to play forward. Rogers had been all-everything at South Sioux City, but Sanderford has said that playing out of position in the middle has hampered her progress. Now, Nebraska may be getting an all new player when Rogers moves to her natural spot, the 4.

"It takes some of the pressure off Chuck," Leonhardt said of the move. "Chuck can do so many things and now she'll be able to. If they try to double team either one of us, the other is open."

Rogers thrived in Nebraska's summer basketball tour of Europe, and enters the season healthy after being nagged by injuries for most of her career. The old Chuck, Sanderford said, is back.

"She's been loose and relaxed," Sanderford said. "Part of that is having Casey out there."

It's been a long enough wait. A Nike, and Street and Smith's high school All-American, Leonhardt played her first two seasons at Illinois. There, she set a Big 10 record with 10 blocks in the conference tournament as a freshman and had a double-double game against No. 3 Old Dominion as a sophomore. She helped the Illini to the Sweet 16 that year. But her playing time went down. She decided things weren't working out.

"I wanted to play," she said. "So I started looking around for a place where I could play."

Sanderford snapped her up. He may be a good coach, but he can't coach someone into 6-foot-5. True centers, he knew, are hard to find. In just two seasons of limited action, Leonhardt had blocked the

same number of shots (88) that the hard working Rogers had accumulated in three years for the Huskers. With a 6-5 player in his program, the possibilities were endless. But as a Division I transfer Leonhardt had to sit out an entire season under NCAA rules.

A long wait for a coach. Leonhardt didn't mind. Another year to learn her new program, and come in ready to go, with no awkward adjustment period on the court. "It was fun," she said. "No pressure, no worrying. Just go out and work hard."

Now she's here. A new player with the experience of a returning player, a bonus. How good will she be now that she's finally in a Husker uniform, fitting into Sanderford's plans? She showed a nice shooter's touch early. She's got some moves (including a Dennis Rodman rebound tap). She runs the court well, moves well, even does get off those toes to jump occasionally. A former all-conference softball player, she's a genuine athlete, not some distaff Shawn Bradley. And oh, yeah she's got personality.

"It's great to get out there," she said.

She played 16 minutes a game at Illinois and still made an impact. At Nebraska, Sanderford wants to use her, make a concentrated effort at realizing her potential.

Now if only he can get her to stop chewing herself out while play is still going on. ❖ NSA

Leonhardt gives Sanderford a presence in the middle that he loves for his system.

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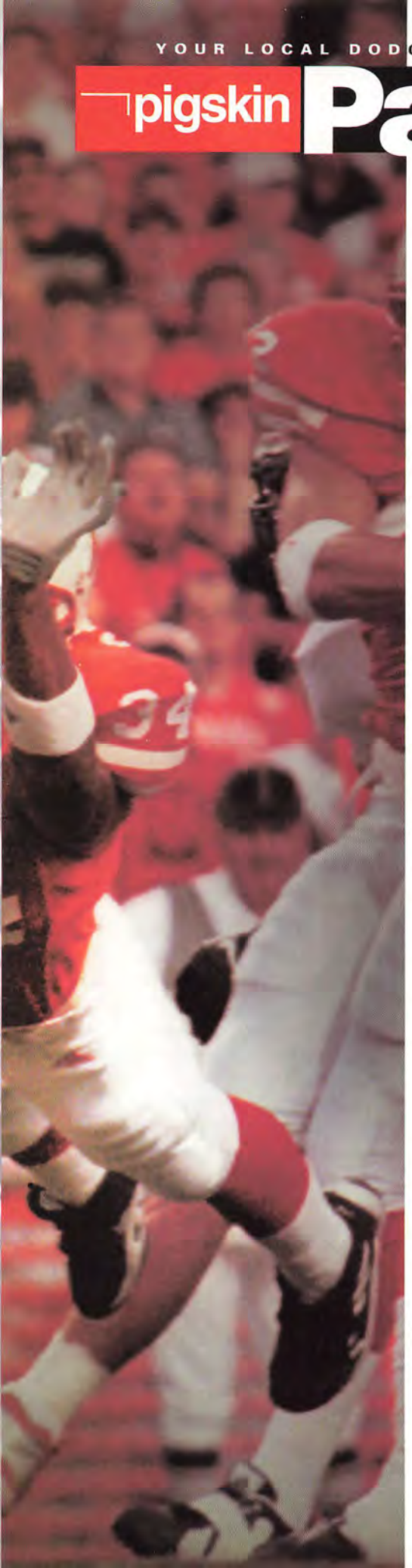

MAMA KNEW BEST

BY TERRY L. HENION

Husker coaches and fans are happy special teams star Randy Stella pleased his mother by playing for Nebraska

Even a casual Nebraska football fan — is there such a thing? — can see that redshirt freshman special teams ace Randy Stella is a budding star.

He is the first man downfield to take on opposing blockers when the Huskers kick off. He works the other side of the kickoff, too, as Nebraska's most efficient kick returner. He covers punts with abandon, zeroing in on hapless punt returners like a wolf after a lamb chop and downing ball after ball inside the 10.

At 6-foot-2, 205 pounds and fast, Stella is all speed and sinew. Call him Nebraska's Guided Muscle.

"I like to be where the action is, " Stella said, chuckling. "And that usually is around the football."

Already, Stella has gotten mention from the national television crews that cover the Husker games. They have mentioned how unusual it is for a player listed as a linebacker to be returning kickoffs. And Husker coaches have repeatedly said that when Stella "learns the system," he is destined to be an impact player as an outside linebacker.

He has spent most of this season playing behind Husker veterans Eric Johnson and Julius Jackson, learning his trade and biding his time.

"The coaches have said just one thing to me about next season," Stella said, "and that is 'be ready.'"

That he is the Huskers' best kickoff return man, averaging 25.4 yards per return, is testament to Stella's athletic ability. It was that athleticism that made the Omaha Benson product one of the state's most highly recruited athletes in 1997. He was recruited by some of the country's most respected football programs, including Nebraska, Michigan and others.

At Benson, he starred in football, basketball and track, winning the state long jump title his senior season with a leap of 23-10.

But when it came time for Stella to pick a college, there was little doubt that he would go to Nebraska. For in the Stella houshold, Mama knows best.

"My mom is such a huge Husker fan and always has been," Stella said. "I think she would have disowned me if I had chosen to go anywhere else. This way, it is close to home and she can come watch me play. There never was any real doubt about where I would go."

Stella — an only child — and his mother Annette — a single mother — share a special relationship. His mother

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rarely missed attending even a practice since the day her son began to participate in sports. And the thought of missing one of his games never entered her mind.

"My mom and I are about as close as you can get," Stella said. "She is more like a big sister than my mom. We can talk about anything."

One thing the Stellas rarely talked about when Randy was growing up is Nebraska football. While his mother would be camped in front of the television, cheering on the Huskers, her son said that he seldom watched.

While other kids his age could reel off every conceivable Nebraska players' statistics, Stella said he usually didn't even know the names of the Husker players, much to his mother's chagrin.

"She'd be in there going nuts when a game was on, yelling at me to come watch and stuff," Stella said, "and there I would be playing some football video game or something. I never liked just sitting around, I always had to be doing something."

Annette Stella said her son's athletic ability is God-given and that sports have always come easy to him. "I even remember the first thing he tried — bowling," she said, laughing. "There were three of them, and they called themselves "'The Pennies.' Randy was only about 8 or 9 then, and they won the league championship.

"Randy won't like me saying this but he still has that trophy up here in the house and it's the biggest trophy he ever won. The Pennies bowling trophy."

Other trophies, medals and sporting baubles followed. Stella excelled at everything he tried.

"I played most everything except soccer," he said. "I never tried that. But I played golf when I was 9, love the game. Basketball was always my favorite sport. But I played baseball, football, ran track."

By the time he was a senior at Benson, it was apparent that Stella was probably the state's most versatile athlete. In football, he was a big star, earning all-state honors at linebacker. He was named to Parade Magazine's All-America teams as an "all-purpose" player, but more about that later.

In basketball, he helped lead the Bunnies to the state tournament. And in track, he ran on the Benson sprint relay team and was the state's best long jumper. Some thought Stella had an outside chance at challenging Gale Sayers' long jump record of 24-10 1/2, but a heel injury that spring sidelined him for a time and hindered that quest.

Nebraska football recruiters came after him hard. They couldn't quite decide what position Stella would play, but recruited him as "an athlete."

Ankle and knee surgery forced Stella to redshirt his freshman season.

"That was kind of hard because I am not used to not playing," Stella said. "But I needed to get my body back in shape, so they did the surgery."

For a time, Nebraska coaches pondered about where Stella would play. His 4.5 speed in the 40 drew the attention of the offensive coaches, and he had been an effective if not great running back in high school.

But the defensive coaches at Nebraska realized his quickness, strength and agility were best-suited for the outside linebacker position, a place big plays are expected.

"I know that some people look at me returning kickoffs and say, 'a linebacker?' and that's all right," Stella said. "Really, I don't consider myself a linebacker or a kick returner or any of that position stuff.

"I'm a football player. I'll do whatever it takes to help the team."

Stella helped immediately this season, especially on special teams. He returned a kickoff for an apparent touchdown against Southern Mississippi, but a penalty wiped out the score, so officially it was a 50-yard return.

"I thought I had one there, but it will come eventually," Stella said.

Stella also has been effective at covering punts. In the Huskers' 37-0 blowout of Texas A&M, it was Stella who twice sped downfield and downed punter Dan Hadenfeldt' kicks inside the 5-yard line.

Hadenfeldt and placekicker Josh Brown are Stella's roommates, and the trio have a flair for the dramatic off the field, too. For example, they are into riding little trail bicycles in the most precarious of locations. Think of those wild "Extreme Sports" capers on ESPN and you'll have an idea.

"Those three kids are nuts, as far as I'm concerned," Annette Stella said, laughing.

Stella's future as a Husker appears to be a bright one. He is being groomed to inherit one of the glamour positions on the revered Blackshirts' defense. But Stella already is hoping his future Husker duties extend farther than defense and special teams.

"I watched that guy from Michigan a couple of years ago — Woodson? — and I thought to myself, 'Hey, I could do that, too,' " Stella said. "I wouldn't mind playing a little offense somewhere down the road. I think I could do it, but I am not sure what the coaches think.

"I know that that I am listed as a linebacker, but I'd rather be known as a 'football player.' That's what I am, a football player."

Stella also plans to compete in the long jump this spring for the Husker track and field team.

"I told the coaches that I don't like sitting around," Stella said, "and they told me it was OK to do it after spring drills are over. I don't know how good I'll be, but I want to try it."

Chances are, Stella will be pretty good. He's always been "pretty good."

Ask any of The Pennies. They have the trophy to prove it.❖ NSA

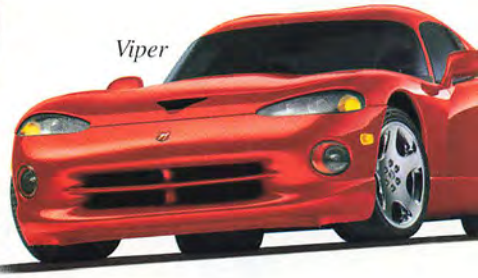
Caravan

Dakota

Avenger

Durango

Neon



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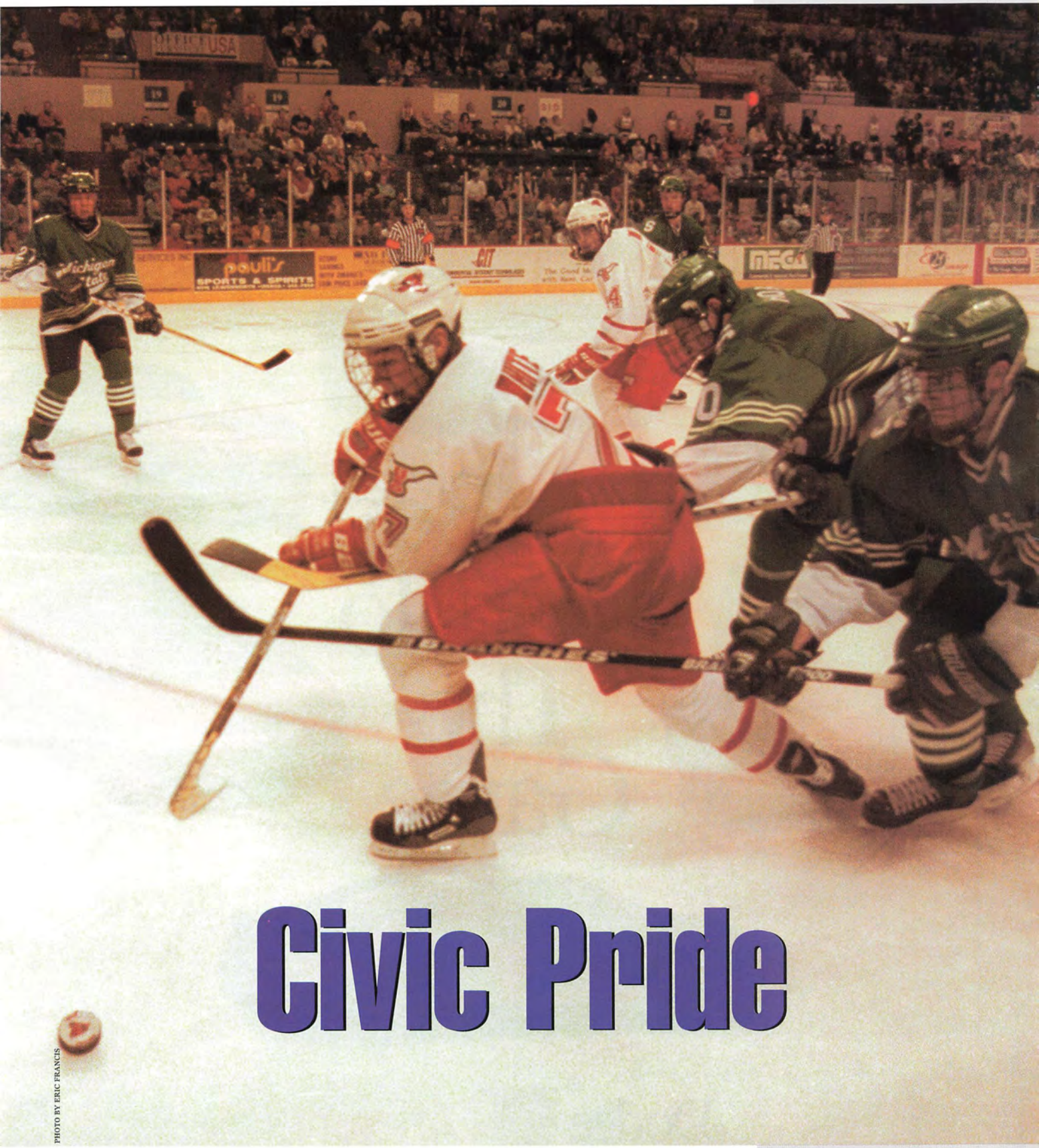

Civic Pride

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

Though previously maligned for its pristine atmosphere, UNO hockey, in its third season, has developed a home ice advantage

They trickle in. That'll happen when you don't have any parking. Some kind of craft show or fall show or boat show, some kind of show is downstairs, and the backup is horrible outside the Omaha Civic Auditorium.

Cars inch forward, circling like sharks, waiting for a space to open up. Meanwhile, their seats wait for them, empty. People in their cars or hiking for blocks aren't watching hockey games. And so the crowd gets off to a crawling start.

Besides, it's a first night. And history is that UNO hockey doesn't play well on day one of a two day series. The Mavericks take their lumps on the first night, still learning the ropes of Division I hockey. On night two, they rally. They fight back valiantly. They play with guts and grit. But that's on night two.

And this is night one.

And now this is the CCHA. No more being able to sneak in wins by surprise. No more Mr. Nice Guy for the new kids. No one will surrender league points to a first-year member. The crowd knows this and they know what to expect. A good effort, but ... are the boys really ready for this?

Besides, the Maverick are known for numbers, as in (half-full) sellouts and polite booster club luncheons, and not necessarily fans. "I've been in this building before," said Notre Dame goalie Tony Zasowski, an ex-Lancer, "and I never really thought much of the crowd."

Ouch. Says one media member on press row, "The fans in here are usually like, 'Yay.' Over at the Lancer games, those people are out for blood."

First night. Late crowd. Bloodless fans. So much for atmosphere.

The seconds tick off and the empty seats are disappearing, one by one. A slight buzz. But already it's starting. The Mavericks are down a man, outnumbered thanks to the penalty box. To a CCHA opponent. There will be no mercy, fans know. And it's only a few minutes into the first period.

The fans don't cheer through penalty kills so much as cringe through them. Plead through them.

Ohnocomeonboysdon'tgiveo neuphereohno! Hold on! Hold on! Please don't give one up, come on, just one more minute...

But Jeff Hoggan is really going hard tonight. Moment by tense moment, the goal remains safe. The Mavericks survive. Back to full strength. The crowd exhales.

The UNO pep band plays "Blues Brothers" music.

Tweet! Another one. The Mavericks have to face off with a CCHA opponent, 5-on-4. And ... they do! The Mavericks are more aggressive, playing harder. They are not hanging by a thread through the penalty kill. They are making plays. They beat a stretch of 5-on-3. They fight and scratch and protect the goal.

Dave Brisson, a Quebecer, swipes an opponent's skates right out from under him with a nifty move of his stick. Officials don't see. But Maverick fans howl their approval.

The beer is kicking in.

Kendall Sidoruk makes a save in goal and the crowd ... erupts? Erupts!

It ... is ... *loud* in the Civic. And the noise is for UNO hockey. Parking headaches are long forgotten, washed away by ringing ears and stinging hands.

Another penalty killed off. Cringing and pleading are replaced by adrenaline. The good kind.

U-N-O! U-N-O! U-N-O!

The Mavericks are hitting out there. Playing hard, finishing checks. Like they mean it. Like they're not intimidated by this CCHA business.

Nick Fohr is sent to the penalty box. *Boooooooooooooo!*

mav sports

The crowd is offended. The Mavericks are getting homered in their own building. Boos rain down on the ice from above. The showers of protest pierce the crisp air in waves.

But it doesn't matter. Tonight is different. The Mavericks aren't merely surviving penalties any more. They're killing them. That's three in the first period, and UNO is still standing. And the crowd, and the team, are acting like it.

UNO, FULL STRENGTH!

(Rooaaarrrrr!)

BUZZZZZZZ! They've made it through the first period. Tied. In the CCHA. The crowd stands up, loving every second. Now this is college hockey!

Between periods, Durango, the skating bull, takes off his head and proposes marriage to a girl in the puck shooting contest. (Sniff!) She hugs Durango. She accepts! The crowd, on a roll now, already in the habit, cheers.

Mascots get all the chicks.

The second period starts as slowly as the first. The puck sits alone at one point, motionless for merely seconds but it seems like forever as the players skate in place. Finally, it finds a stick.

CCHA opponents don't like being played head up by UNO. Whitey, Jason White, an undersized scrapper, finds himself slammed headfirst into the boards. James Chalmers gets popped right in the chin. Everything breaks down and UNO gives up an easy goal out of nowhere.

The crowd is deflated. It offers a low murmur.

But then they wake up again. The Civic is breathing, great bursts of air being inhaled and exhaled with each twist and turn of the puck. *Oooooooooooooooh! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!* Every action on the ice brings forth its distinct audible reaction from the stands.

Shane Glover is taken out on a breakaway. *Hoooooaaaaah!* demands the crowd. Where was that call? Come on, Ref! Say something, Kemp!

Billy Pugliese takes a perfect feed from only feet away and one-times it home. Clean.

The train whistle sounds at the UNO goal: *Hooooooooonnnnnnnnnnk! Hooooooooonnnnnnnk!*

The roar is solid, level and all-encompassing, a great mass of noise, for a good 30 seconds.

Eventually, it dissolves to, U-N-O! U-N-O!

The opponents get another goal to go up, but the air tingles. Lancer fans would be proud. The Mavericks are in this thing.

And so are their fans.

The third period starts off almost sleepy. The teams are into it, but the crowd isn't used to this. That was a lot of energy. They're wrung out.

Sidoruk takes care of that. He snags a save, waking up the Civic. The crowd obliges with a cheer. Then he makes a backhanded grab while falling on his can. The place goes nuts.

BOOM-BOOM THACK! BOOM-BOOM THACK! *We will, we will rock you!*

"Everybody likes a glove save, I guess," he'd say later with a shrug.

It gets better. Sidoruk gets bowled over in a pile up, struggling to get back in front of the goal. The puck perches an inch off the goal line, suspended forever, it seems. Sidoruk can't get up in time. All he can do is look. Everyone's locked up, struggling to get free and get to that puck. It's all happening in slow motion.

Perhaps aided by the magical stoppage in time, Hoggan taps the puck out with his stick. UNO dodges a bullet. The Civic is in a frenzy.

But time is running out on UNO. The crowd starts to tighten up. The clock is ticking way too fast. And the Mavericks are down by a goal. Three minutes. Two minutes. Closing in on one ... will this great effort go for nothing?

But then UNO gets the puck in its own zone. And then there's Hoggan (how many plays has he made?) somehow all alone out of nowhere and it's headed right for him! In the final minute and a half!

"This year, it's a never die attitude," he said after the game. "The guys, you know, we're never gonna die out there."

He gets the puck, all alone at the opposing Blue Line, and takes off, hoping to outrace the trailing defenders and the clock. The Civic rises to its feet as one in anticipation as Hoggan closes in on the goalie, Mano a Mano. He juggles the puck on his stick to set up his shot, faking...

Double, triple, BACK DOOR!

Do you believe in miracles? *Hooooooooooooooooonnnnnnnnnnnnnk!*

Yes!

"I never heard the rink that loud before," Sidoruk said.

Hoggan, who had been banished to the penalty box for leaving his feet (skates) earlier in the game, lets loose with a joyous swan dive onto the ice as his teammates mob him, drinking it all up.

Pure bedlam.

Mass hysteria.

Holy cow.

"Right after the goal when I'm trying to talk to our defense I can hardly hear myself," UNO Coach Mike Kemp said. "... That's when you love it, when the crowd is just absolutely taking the roof off the place."

U-N-O! U-N-O! U-N-O!

"Today they really got behind UNO," Zasowski, the ex-Lancer, the doubter, said after the game. "They really kept them in the game."

And stayed in the game. With 52 seconds left, Hoggan, the hero, is picked out of a scuffle and sent to the penalty box. This time, the crowd responds with an ovation.

Dododododododododo, dododododododododo, *I don't want to work! I just want to bang on the drum all day!*

Grown men and women dance in the aisles.

"This was one of the big reasons I came to Omaha," Hoggan said.

The Mavericks fight to 00:00. They fight through overtime. It's a tie. Never has a tie been so sweet. It's not like kissing your sister. It's like kissing the opponent's sister. And she's hot!

The fans found out what college hockey could be. The Mavericks found out they belonged in the CCHA.

They both found out that UNO hockey has a home after all. And sometimes, there's no place like it. ◆ NSA

— Kalani Simpson

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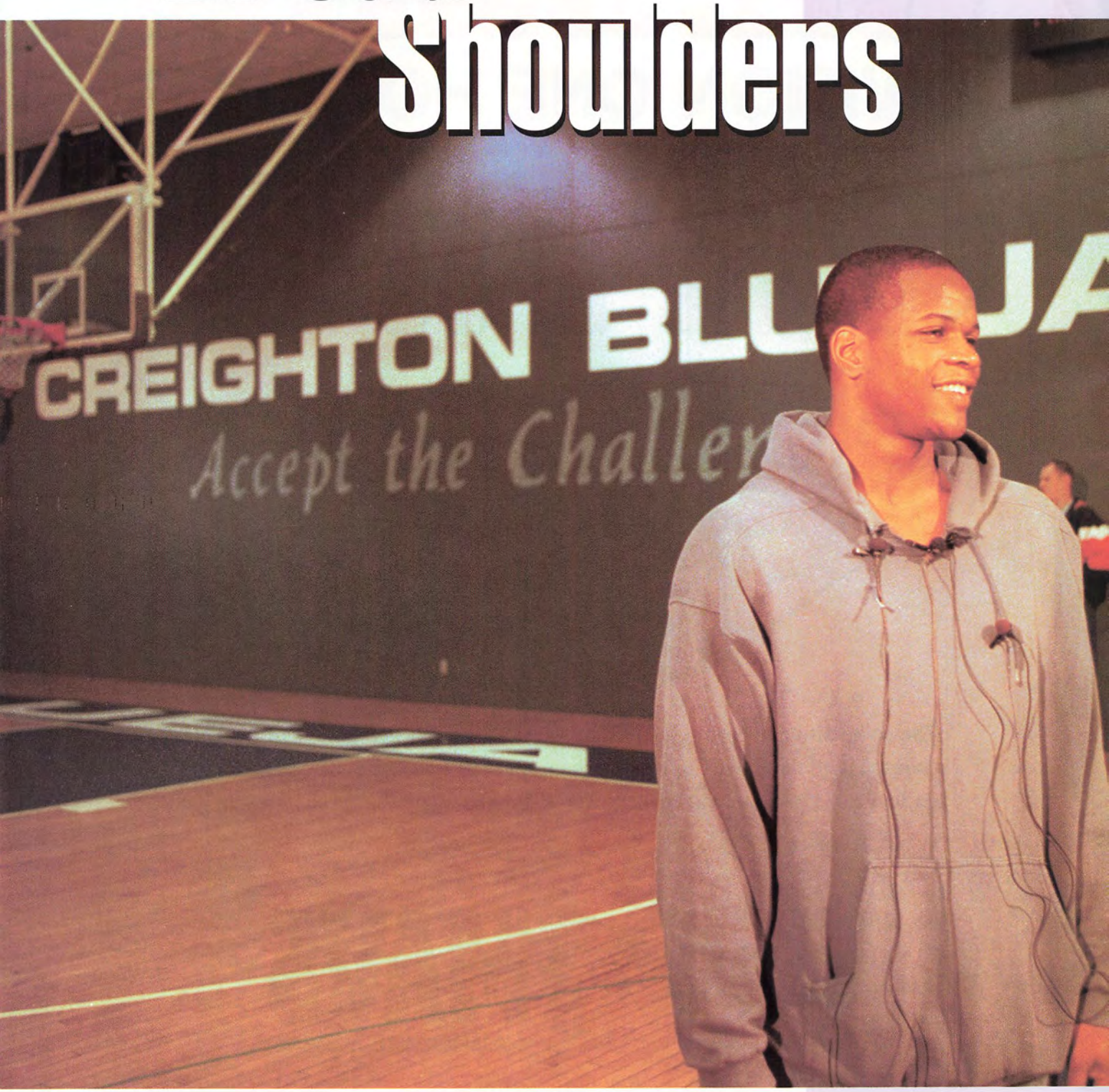


Ben Walker's leadership took Creighton for a ride in the 1999 postseason...and he says he'll accept the role again if need be

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

Perhaps, the transition began as Creighton started its run at the 1999 postseason.

Don't be mistaken. Rodney Buford still was this team's star. But Ben Walker was sending a message to Missouri Valley Conference foes: Creighton was no one-man team.

"I think he (Walker) was the MVP of the conference tourney," Creighton Coach Dana Altman said. "Rodney won the award, but..."

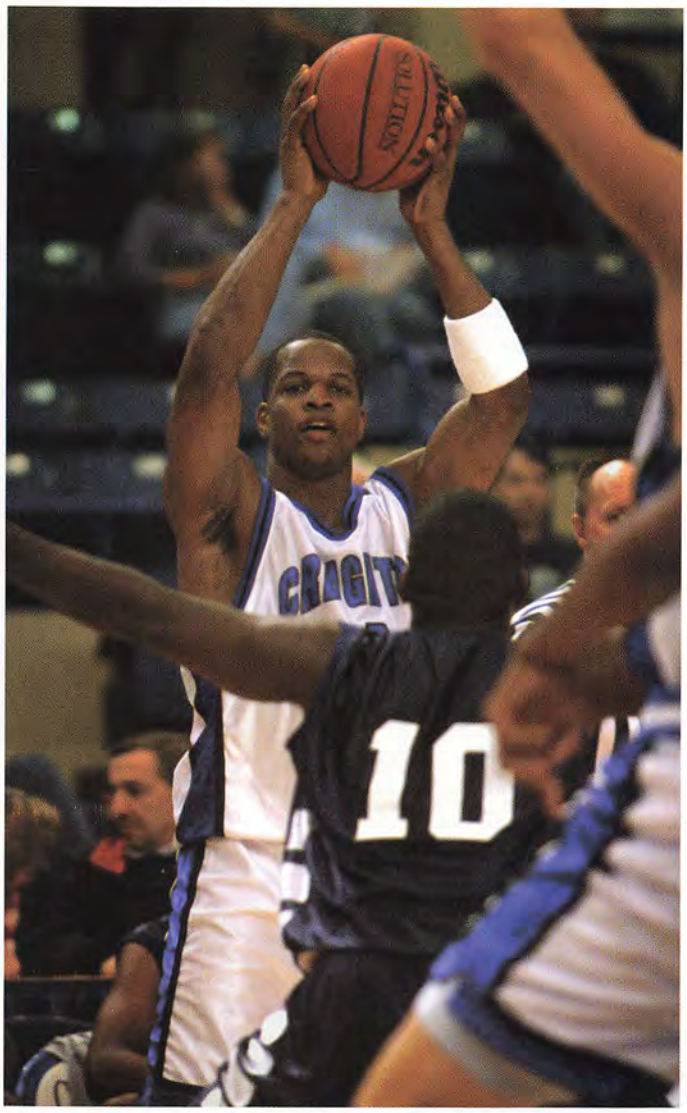
No buts about it. Walker saved his best performances for when Creighton needed them most. He averaged 16.7 points and 6.6 rebounds in eight of the Bluejays' last nine games. He led Creighton in both of the Bluejays' NCAA tournament contests, scoring 16 against Louisville and 15 against No. 5 Maryland.

Perhaps, the transition was complete when Walker challenged Buford, during halftime of the Bluejays' conference tourney match-up against Evansville, to step up his play.

If the Bluejays were going to win the championship, Walker realized, they would need Buford at his best. And Buford, though he had hit a huge shot to help Creighton beat Southwest Missouri the night before, had all but sleepwalked through two and a half games in the tournament.

"Rod wasn't playing up to his capabilities like he should," their teammate Ryan Sears said. "Ben got on him, and Rod came out and played better the second half."

Buford, Creighton's 2,000-point scorer, had been invisible in the first half, with zero



points in perhaps the season's biggest game. After a halftime chat with Walker, a newly energized Buford emerged to score the first nine points of the second half. His second-half bonanza included six shots in a row without missing, highlighted by a steal that led to a coast-to-coast dunk. After the game, Creighton's contingent stormed the floor to celebrate the MVC title, and Buford, who finished the game with 21 points and 13 rebounds, was tournament MVP. Give Walker an assist.

"When Ben says something," Sears said, "people listen."

Walker puts a little different spin on the challenge issued to last year's leading scorer: "I just told Rodney he's not playing up to his potential. He was doing little bitty things. We needed him to come out and play. He was like, if 'I'm going to play, you're going to have to play also.'

"That told me I'm going to have to play.

"We went out and gave it all we had. The results were pretty good."

The results were a 22-9 record, a conference postseason tournament championship and a first-round victory in the NCAA Tournament.

For the season — his second as a Bluejay — Walker averaged nearly 10 points and 5 rebounds a game. Walker figures he'll be a marked man this season. Last year, the opposition keyed on Buford, who averaged nearly 19 points per game.

This season, they'll look to stop Walker in the clutch. No problem, the 6-foot-2 shooting guard said. "My assist numbers will go up. If I get to the hole and a defender helps out, someone will be open."

Possibly 6-foot-8 forward Nerijus Karlikanova or Sears, Creighton's playmaking junior. "The points will be more open because we have a lot of guys who can score," Walker said.

But in the clutch, Sears said, the Bluejays will look to Walker, who came to Creighton from Oak Creek, Wis. "Down the stretch, when we needed a big basket, he'd come up with one somehow," Sears said. "I think we're going to look to him to score more for us."

Walker said he'd welcome the opportunity. "If it comes down to scoring to make us win a game, I'll do whatever it takes.

"I will accept this role."

Four years ago, some wondered whether Walker would ever play basketball at Creighton.

First, there was football. As a senior in 1995, Walker rushed for 1,163 yards and scored 144 points in just six games. It was his first year of organized football. Seven of the 11 Big 10 Conference schools wanted Walker to play football for them.

Walker thought otherwise. "It (football) was just a one-year thing," he said in 1997. "It's fun, but I couldn't see myself playing football."

Altman could see him playing basketball — at Creighton.

First, Walker had to score high enough on his ACT to meet NCAA requirements. He fell short, and ended up enrolling at Iowa Western Community College as a part-time student. He didn't play basketball.

As a freshman, Walker started 24 of 28 games, averaged 5.6 points per game and had 45 assists.

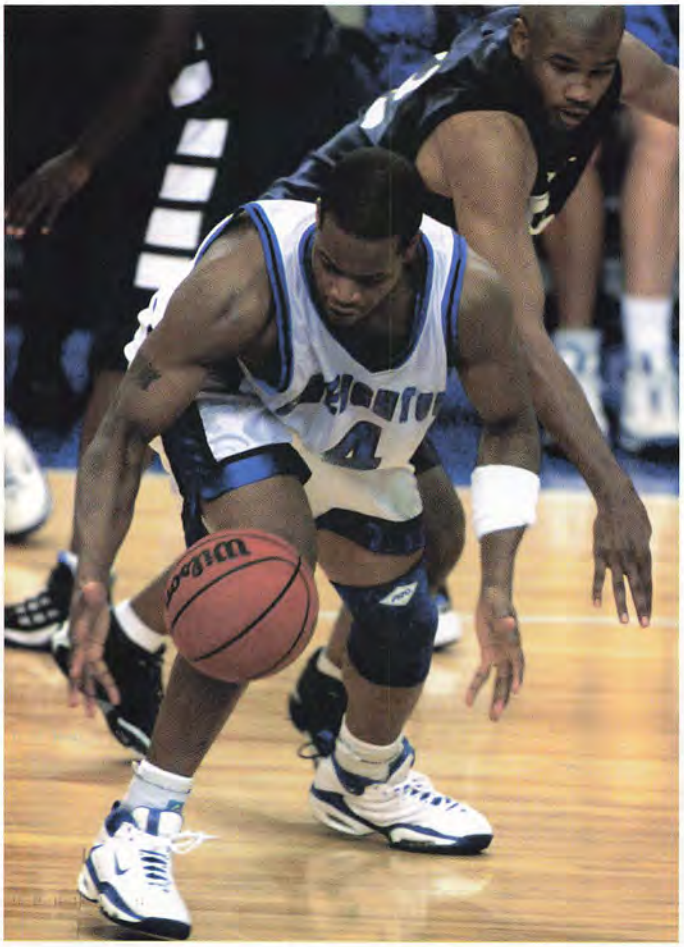
As a sophomore, Walker led the Bluejays in scoring and rebounding five times. He was Creighton's third leading rebounder and was second in assists.

As a junior, Walker said the Bluejays have set high expectations for the team. Topping last season won't be easy. "I feel we need to make a bigger statement," Walker said. "Last year, we snuck up on some people. This year, they know about us."

True, but still ranked Creighton fifth in a balanced preseason poll.

Sears said he and Walker complement each other well. "We're different players. He's more of a strong, physical, take-the-ball-to-the-basket type of player. I'm more outside, pass-the-ball to him type of player."

Although he's just 6-2, Sears said, Walker can battle



against taller defenders inside "He can play both inside and outside. He's so quick. When Ben gets it going, he's hard to stop."

Early into the 1999-2000 campaign, Bluejay players heard a common theme: Was there life after Rodney Buford?

Walker said, no doubt, Buford's departure to the NBA's Miami Heart leaves a scoring void on the Bluejay squad. As does the loss of center Doug Swenson, who averaged nearly 12 points per game.

"We're going to suffer without Rodney because he put up a lot of points for us."

But don't fret for the Bluejays, said Altman, in his sixth season at Creighton, provided the team newcomers progress. Altman, NABC District 12 Coach-of-the-Year, said several new players will have to see quality playing time immediately. The list beings with juco transfer Livan Pyfrom, a 6-11 center. The squad includes seven freshmen.

As Walker finds himself at the midpoint of his Bluejay career, he marvels at the view back and look forward.

"I've played in the NIT, NCAA, won a conference championship. I never would have expected these things to happen."

Looking forward, Walker notes that he and Sears have another year together. If the newcomers progress, a big man steps forward to complement Karlikanovas and replace him next season, and...

Walker stops and smiles.

"Who knows what could happen? This could be the year. And next year..." ❖ NSA

— Kevin Warneke

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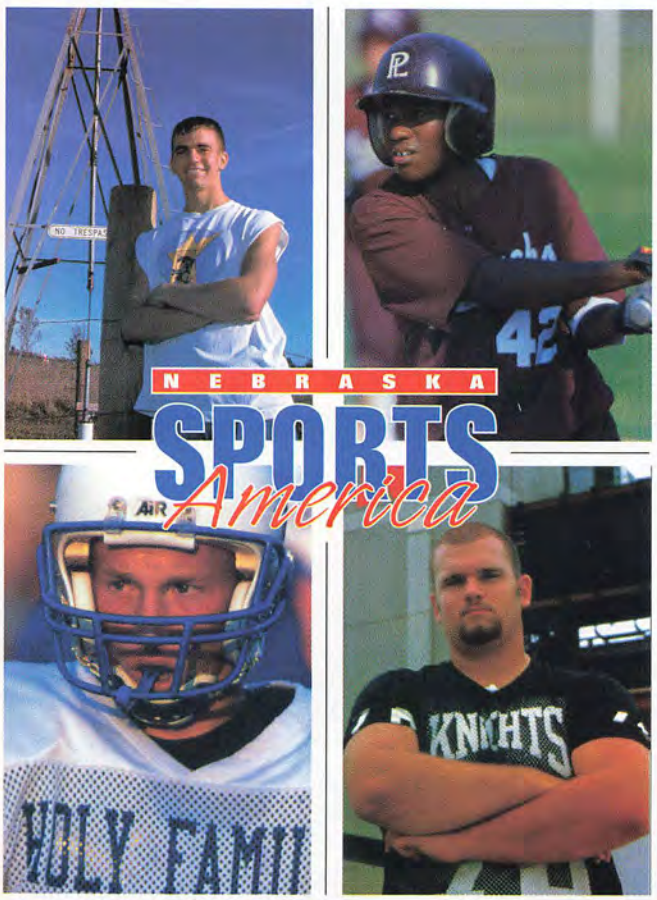
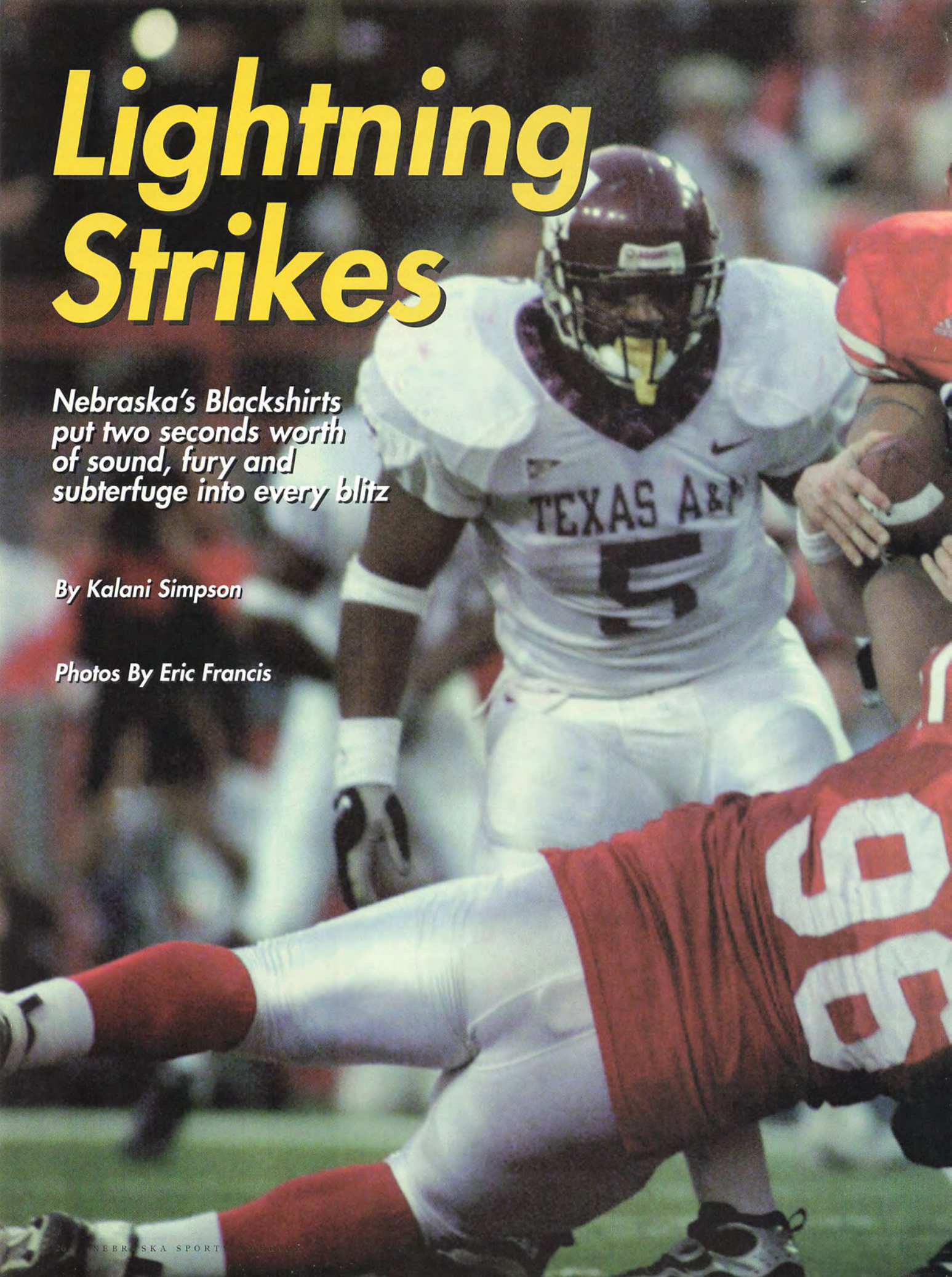


Lightning Strikes

Nebraska's Blackshirts put two seconds worth of sound, fury and subterfuge into every blitz

By Kalani Simpson

Photos By Eric Francis



cover Story

Up high in the press box, Nebraska defensive backs coach George Darlington and rush ends coach Nelson Barnes see something. A weakness to exploit, perhaps. An opening. A match-up. Something you can't see at field level. Something invisible to the untrained eye.

Through the magic of technology, their discovery is in defensive coordinator Charlie McBride's ear instantaneously. McBride hoards the information gleefully, nods knowingly, waiting for just the right moment to pull the trigger. To attack.

To blitz.

From out of nowhere, it seems, they swoop in at McBride's call, mauling their prey like pumas. The Visigoths and Huns and Vandals sacked Rome. McBride's minions sack quarterbacks.

The Nebraska Cornhuskers wield the blitz like a hammer over opponents' heads. They bring it swiftly and with great force. From all directions. At any time. With devastating results.

Interception.

Sack.

Fumble.

Touchdown.

Most successful blitzes don't come from pure brute force. Next time you get a chance, take a look at a football player's shoes. More and more, they're starting to look like sneakers. For sneaking...

Or a "disguise blitz," as nickel man Joe Walker puts it.

It is a spread formation, and the Huskers have five defensive backs in the game in order to cover it all. They look perfectly innocent, or as innocent as a group of trained killers known as the "Blackshirts" can muster. But before the snap Walker is lined up inside of his man, inching toward the line of scrimmage, trying hard to disguise the fact that he's about to abandon his inside receiver and make a mad dash for the quarterback. Meanwhile, free safety Clint Finley also is ever so subtly positioning himself so that he can get a run

cover Story

When linebackers like Johnson come, linemen like Vanden Bosch are sometimes free to make big plays.

at the snap of the ball to leave center field and catch up to Walker's man. Linebackers Carlos Polk and Eric Johnson are making no secrets of the fact that they'll rush the quarterback, alerting the linemen that a last second change in assignments is coming. And alerting the quarterback that he'll have to hurry.

But only Polk will come, charging up the middle past a confused center. Johnson instead will slyly back off into a zone pass coverage, short over the middle, taking Polk's place and hoping for the juicy errant throws that come so often from panicked quarterbacks.

Rover Mike Brown, lined up man-to-man on the other slot receiver, opposite Walker, instead will run to the center of the field to take Finley's spot as deep safety. There, he'll take a deep third of the field and read the quarterback's reactions.

And most improbable of all is lineman Aaron Wills, snorting up a storm in his three-point stance on the left side of the defense, ready to crush the quarterback and do some damage. He is supposed to drop back in a zone. But when the play starts, it is Wills who is chasing Brown's man, a speedy receiver, across the field. A 185-pound defensive back storms the trenches while a 250-pound rush end is covering wideouts. The perfect crime.

On the other side, Walker's side, right rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch takes a wide release, taking the tackle out with him and creating a gaping hole in the offensive line between tackle and guard that Walker closes with a *whoosh!*

Meanwhile, one man over, tackle Loran Kaiser heads inside, trying to occupy both the guard and center so that Polk can loop around behind him. Maybe a hold? All's fair in love and defense. The other tackle, Steve Warren, loops to the outside to take Wills' place. Warren is the contain man now. He makes sure the quarterback can't escape to his right.

Walker may have started slow, creeping

Fumbles are often a by-product of the successful blitz.

up, delaying his blitz until the very last second, but that only allows the scheme to unfold without accounting for him, leaving him unblocked. And besides, his speed more than makes up for it. On the field, just like in McBride's chalk talks, the timing is tightly choreographed.

Polk has snuck through center of the line with Kaiser's help and collapses the pocket nearly right up the gut, coming hard. The quarterback has to make a decision and he has to make one right now. He has a blink of an eye before Finley and Brown and Wills can shuffle their pass coverage — and before Polk turns him into hamburger. Now the halfback has make a decision too. Which blitzer does he block? Walker or Polk? He protects the middle first, choosing Polk. Walker is left to run in free.

The quarterback turns to get rid of the ball quickly, gambling that he can release it and take advantage of the blitz before Finley can get to Walker's man.

If he does, he pierces Nebraska's weakness ... but then there's Walker, right in his face, right on time, like a horror movie monster popping out of nowhere.

It was a variation of this play that helped Walker cause two fumbles, one returned for a touchdown, on the nickel blitz against Iowa State.

On this particular day, in this particular play, Walker knocks the pass down. A big play for the Blackshirts, but as we have seen, it could have been so much better.

Or worse. Major Applewhite took a pounding from Polk, but delivered to Kwame Cavil a millisecond earlier for a go-ahead 17-13 third quarter touchdown at Texas. If a quarterback is tough and smart and fearless — like Applewhite — or if the blockers can somehow pick up on the surprise and survive for the first few harrowing seconds, allowing receivers to beat those impossibly precarious coverage schemes, the blitz is a big gamble. The big play can go the other way.

Live by it, all defensive coaches know, die by it.

On this play, with Walker's batted pass, it's a standoff. The quarterback heads back to the huddle, having survived with just a minor hit, courtesy of Polk, and a minor scare. Incomplete pass, and nothing more. He's faced the monster, and he'll live to fight another day. But he has to wonder: Where are they going to come from next?

"That's the thing," Walker said. "They don't know if I'm coming or not. But when I do come, it's at 100 miles per hour."

Walker hopes he gets to come again. And so does Polk. Tony Ortiz, the outside linebacker left on the sideline in the nickel package for Walker, can only lick his chops and hope he's next. Cornerback Ralph Brown, left on an island in man coverage, waits for his next shot of adrenaline.

Up above the field, far away from the action, Darlington and Barnes are already back to work, scanning downward again. Looking for another matchup, another chance to strike.

"Coach McBride tells us," Walker said. "If you're coming in, go 100 percent. Whoever's going, you try to run 'em over like a Mack truck."

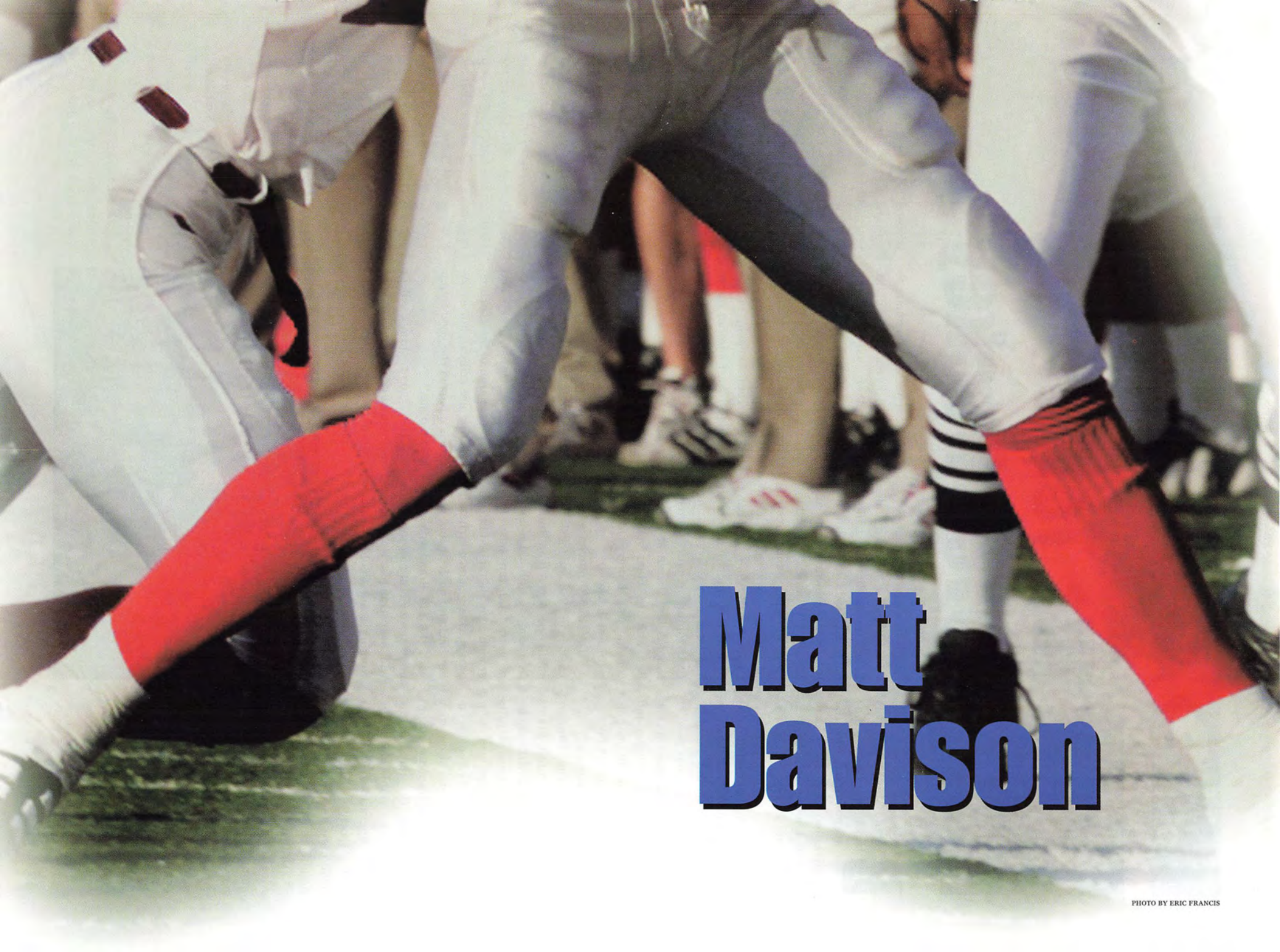
On the sideline, McBride patiently paces, waiting for the right moment until he can unleash the demons again.

It'll come. It'll come. ❖ NSA

Even freshmen like Justin Smith can get into the act.

NEBRASKA

SPORTS America



Matt Davison

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

SEEDS of excellence

BY DR. SHAWN M. SCHMIDT

His Town Loves Hockey

Behind any prosperous business venture lies an individual with the creative business savvy and strategic knowledge needed to orchestrate success.

For the Omaha Lancers Hockey Club, that individual is Team President Ted Baer. A native Omahan and business entrepreneur, Baer has been at the helm of the Lancers hockey program the past 13 years and has put Omaha on the map as one of the top Junior A hockey towns in North America.

On the ice, the Lancers have won the United States Hockey League (USHL) championship twice, league playoffs five times and have won 30 or more games for seven consecutive seasons. Last season, they chalked up a franchise-record 43 victories. Off the ice, the Lancers are a viable part of the family operation, Alan Baer and Associates, Inc., which headquarters in the Dundee neighborhood of Omaha.

Drawing players from Alaska to New York and many points in between, the Lancers have grown as a premiere program for talented hockey players to develop socially, academically and athletically. With a network of "host families" that take in players during their stay to the overall embrace of the local hockey community, being a Lancer means being an Omahan.

Although it has been under Baer's watch that the Lancers have excelled, he credits former Lancer owners Tom and Marilyn Edwards for their "love of hockey and foresight to bring hockey back to Omaha" in 1986. "I can't believe they pulled it off." It had been over 20 years since the minor league Omaha Knights last skated at Ak-Sar-Ben and it's clear now that Omaha was hungry for the return of hockey.

The Baers purchased the Lancers in 1988 and for Ted the challenge was clear, but far from simple: to build a hockey program and fan base from ground zero. He tapped into his own marketing and merchandising background from his work with the old Brandeis department store chain and set out to win over Omaha. He knew a winning team would be much easier to sell than a losing one.

"We have been fortunate to have good coaching from the start," Baer said. "Frank Serratore coached us for two years (1988-89 and 89-90) and was instrumental in getting it turned around. We have continued to have great coaching and our current coach, Mike Hastings, is just another example of someone whose contribution to the success of the Lancers has been huge."

Baer is quick to credit many people for all the accomplishments of Lancer hockey. "You must put the right pieces of the puzzle together and hire the right people to make the whole thing work. Some pieces may be bigger than others and the pieces around the coaching position are critical, but everyone is a part of the good things we've done."

The "good things" Baer mentioned can be measured in several ways. A total of 95 Lancer players have earned Division I college hockey scholarships during the last nine years and 17 players have been drafted by National Hockey League (NHL) clubs. At the turnstile, the Lancers have been very successful playing in front of large crowds, with a continuous record of 235 sellout games and attendance of nearly 6,000 per game. Even with the arrival of Division I hockey at UNO, the Lancers have maintained a strong and loyal fan base that keeps them atop the USHL in attendance figures.

NSA FILE PHOTO

Expanding on the success of the Lancers program, Baer and his team are branching out into central Nebraska. The Tri-City Storm begins play in the USHL in the fall of 2000 – representing Grand Island, Kearney and Hastings – and 75 percent of the seats in a new arena being built for the Storm have already been sold on a season-ticket basis.

Baer is in the hockey business, but the payoff for him obviously goes beyond the bottom line. "I really enjoy watching the NHL playoffs and Stanley Cup games and seeing players from our team or league succeed," Baer said. "Knowing that you were a part of their journey to the very top of the hockey world is a great feeling."❖ NSA

Dr. Shawn M. Schmidt is an Omaha chiropractic physician and professional race driver.

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561-7001

1999-2000 Omaha Lancers USHL Home Schedule

Friday	November 19	GREEN BAY
Saturday	November 20	GREEN BAY
Friday	November 26	LINCOLN
Saturday	November 27	SIOUX FALLS
Friday	December 3	ROCHESTER
Friday	December 10	CEDAR RAPIDS
Saturday	December 11	THUNDER BAY
Wednesday	December 15	SIOUX FALLS
Friday	December 17	FARGO
Saturday	December 18	TWIN CITIES
Friday	January 7	WATERLOO
Satruday	January 8	FARGO
Tuesday	January 11	DUBUQUE
Saturday	January 15	DES MOINES
Friday	January 28	USA USHL
Saturday	January 29	ROCHESTER
Tuesday	February 1	LINCOLN
Friday	February 11	ROCHESTER
Saturday	February 12	SIOUX FALLS
Friday	February 25	TWIN CITIES
Saturday	February 26	USA USHL
Wednesday	March 1	SIOUX CITY
Saturday	March 11	FARGO
Saturday	March 18	THUNDER BAY
Saturday	March 25	DES MOINES

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SPORTS, COMPUTERS AND THE MEN WHO LOVE THEM

By Anthony Flott

How has the Internet changed the lives of sports fans? NSA takes a look at the cases of three degenerates, er, subjects

GO.com
News Money Entertainment Kids Family
Search for on ESPN.com Find
ESPN store.com
uBid.com
Online Auction
Up to 70% off of the
Browse El
ESPN Network: ESPN.com | NFL.com | NBA.com | NASCAR | NHL.com | WNBA.com | ABCSports | FANTASY | STORE
College Football
College Football
Scores/Schedules
Rankings
Standings
Statistics
Transactions
Injuries
Weekly lineup
Teams
Recruiting
Sport Sections
NFL
Scores
College Football
Scores
NBA
Scores
M College BB
Scores
NHL
Scores
W College BB
Scores
Soccer
Scores
Golf Online
Scores
Baseball
Soccernet (UK)
NASCAR
Iron Bowl rivalry among game's best
Earlier this year, the Iron Bowl looked like it would be all about pride. Fast forward a few weeks and Saturday's pairing of Alabama and Auburn shapes up as critical to the SEC bowl picture. It's always a test for the visitor, but this year it'll be a test for the home team, too.
Alabama and Mike DuBose face a test with Auburn.
Top 25 previews
Chat wrap: ESPN's Kirk Herbstreit
South: SEC serves up a bowl-ful
Tragedy mars Texas A&M tradition
A 90-year tradition at Texas A&M turned deadly early Thursday in College Station. At least nine students were killed and 28 injured when a large stack of logs assembled for the school's annual pregame bonfire collapsed. A bonfire is built each year by students to show their burning desire to beat rival Texas.
College Football Spotl
VIDEO
Chat wrap: Beano Cook
ESPN's veteran college f
up a bold prediction for N
Chat wrap: Joe Hamilton
Georgia Tech's quarterba
the Heisman Trophy is fa
hifi.com
Sign on. Sit back.
ON THE AIR
ESPN
Mtn. West football
Thu., 8 p.m. ET
Air Force at Colo. St.
ESPN Regional TV
Complete TV Listing

In the beginning, God created man. But man was lonely, so God created ... sports. But man could not get his score updates fast enough, so God created ... the Internet.

(Or was that Al Gore?)

Regardless, doesn't it seem as if the Internet's been with us forever? Who can remember a time without e-mail, or those ubiquitous www dot-com commercials?

The Internet's impact on the wide world of sports, of course, has been immense. Log on to Yahoo!, type in "sports" and up pops 421 categories and more than 20,668 hits. Everything from Adventure Racing to Wrestling. Is tug-of-war your thing? Then log on to the Scottish Tug-of-War Association and get the lowdown on all the riveting action. Camel racing, you say? Head over to the Australian Camel Racing Association's web site. Bullfighting? La Historia de Las Plazas de Toros en Espana gives you the sport's complete history. Or maybe you want to get the scoop on cockfighting, racewalking or Tchoukball ("The fastest handball sport in the world.").

It's all out there just waiting for you to type in that www address, which will whisk you to this magical world in mere

seconds (depending on your modem).

You can surf through halls of fames, read about sports movies, download stats or upload your league softball standings. As I write this, on a Sunday, I'm listening to ESPN Radio over my computer and catching all the NFL highlights.

But what are most guys looking for? I say "guys" because to tell you the truth, most women aren't surfing the web to satisfy their sports cravings. And what are the fellas looking for (besides porn, of course)? Certainly not information about Sepak Takraw (a skill ball game originating from Asia that combines the teamwork of volleyball, the dexterity of soccer and the finesse of badminton — got that off the web). No, most of us are after stuff like scores, statistics, articles, chat rooms, etc.

At least that's what most of my friends seek out. And I don't think they're too far off the norm. Which got me thinking: Why not ask them how they use the Internet when it comes to sports? So I did. Their answers follow below. A few common threads occurred: No one likes having to pay extra for various services (not surprising given how cheap they are. And they look forward to the day when you can download a live game from anywhere in your country right to your desktop.

They are guys. Sports lovers. Internet addicts. Here's what they have to say.

File Edit Window Sign Off Help
Read Write Mail Center Print My Files My AOL Favorites Internet Channels People Quote
Find http://www.omaha.com/Omaha/BigRed
The Big Red Page
OMAHA.COM | WORLD-HERALD | COMMUNITY | CLASSIFIEDS | DIRECTORY | SEARCH | HELP
Sports@OMAHA.COM
Go... Search
Saturday, November 20
01:50 PM (CST)
REGIONAL
World-Herald Sports
Big Red Page
High School Sports
NebraskaGolf.Com
OmahaSoccer.Com
Community Sports
Husker Headquarters
video highlights
Kansas Game - 10/30
Texas A&M Game - 11/06
KMTV
...are closer than you think.
The BIG RED PAGE
YOUR HOME FOR NEBRASKA FOOTBALL
MEMORIAL STADIUM
Stadium VR | Tickets | Seating | Parking
NU Looks South for Help
One analyst says the Huskers should be cheering for Florida State Saturday.
Also:
Century's Greatest NU Players: No. 43 - Aaron Taylor
Solich Plans No Shakeup for I-Backs
Husker Report
Solich Plans No Shakeup for I-Backs
Century's Greatest NU Players: No. 43 - Aaron Taylor
Fumble! Don't Mention It at NU
NU's Diedrick to Stay Part of Rotation
NU's Field Turf Attracts Interest
Century's Greatest NU Players: No. 45 - Frank Solich
Steven Pivovar: Picking Just One Brown Is Tough
Tentative 2000 Nebraska Schedule
Currently 47°F
Huskers @ Colorado
Nov. 26 at 1:30 p.m.
Live on ABC
Download Quicktime Version (247K)
1999 Huskers
Schedule
Spring Roster
Fall Roster
Depth Chart
By Position
Husker Statistics
All-America

CHRIS

Name: Chris.

Age: 33.

Marital status: Married (and whipped).

Kids: Three.

Occupation: Salesman.

Work hours: Works out of his home, 8 to 5.

Computer: Toshiba laptop.

Provider: Company dial-up network.

No. of e-mail accounts: Three.

Browser: Internet Explorer.

Favorite sports: 1. College football; 2. Pro football; 3. College Basketball. 4. Pro baseball; 5. Pro Hockey.

Hours per week watching sports on TV: Six.

AF: How many hours a day are you on the Internet?

Chris: Two hours a day. Most of it's work. All of it's work, really.

AF: Come on, all of that's work-related?

Chris: OK, 25 percent is sports. When I go through my company dial-in, they can follow whatever I do, so ... a lot has to be work-related. They've sent out warnings. Not to me specifically, but to all users, that they monitor our e-mail and that we should keep our language to politically correct terms.

AF: Number of bookmarks?

Chris: None. I don't now how to do that.

AF: What's your favorite sports web site?

Chris: It used to be www.statsinc.com. It's the only one I ever look up anymore.

AF: What's available?

Chris: Everything. All the stats you could ever imagine. You purchase it by type of sports. I bought football so I bought pro and college. You can do baseball, basketball, the full gamut. Cost is $19 a year. That was my first and only Internet purchase.

AF: What's your main reason for using statsinc.?

Chris: Fantasy football. I've played fantasy football for three years now. I'm last every year.

AF: This year? Has it made a difference?

Chris: To some degree.

AF: Do you regret getting the service, then?

Chris: No. Well, partially. They don't keep it updated. They have daily articles or daily updates and they're good with the injury part of it and the player news. But they have daily editorials that they do and Fridays are key themes because they tell you who they think is going to have a good week and who you should play. But every week that Friday edition has come in like the next Monday. So its like, why even bother? It's five days late. For that reason they're putzes.

AF: What type of sports-related info are you looking for?

Chris: Oh ... player updates. Updates on the Huskers. Updates on college football.

America Online
File Edit Window Sign Off Help
Read Write Mail Center Print My Files My AOL Favorites Internet Channels People Quotes
Find
http://www.huskerwebcast.com/main.stm
Huskers!- www.huskerwebcast.com - The Official Site of the University of Nebraska Athletic Department - Li
huskerwebcast.com
University of Nebraska Athletics Official Site
Jump To...
Select a Sport
Golf Bags?
PRAJA Football
Millennium Team
Nebraska Pregame Notes vs. Colorado
Lincoln -- After back-to-back wins over nationally ranked teams at home, the No. 4/4/3 (AP/Coaches/BCS) Nebraska Cornhuskers are 9-1 on the season, 6-1 in Big 12 action and control their own destiny. Only Colorado (6-4, 5-2) stands in the way of a Big 12 North title and a rematch with Texas in the 1999 Big 12 Championship game in San Antonio, Texas on Dec. 4 (click here for full pregame release, NCAA statistics and more game information).
Colorado Pregame Release in HTML format
Colorado Pregame Release in PDF Format
Husker Women Lead After First Session of Shoot Out; Men Trail N.C. State
Lincoln -- The Nebraska swimming and diving teams opened up a weekend of action on Friday night with the first session of the Husker Shoot Out at the Devaney Sports Center (click here for full release)

AF: Do you visit many other sites?

Chris: ESPN Sportszone. USA Today. New York Times.

AF: Any chat rooms?

Chris: No.

AF: Polls?

Chris: I've done that once or twice. It really stimulates me.

AF: Are you being facetious?

Chris: Yes. It's all right. I think the one time I did that the next day or that night they published it on ESPN, so I got to see the results. But unless you're hitting their site all the time or watching the program or reading their magazine, you never get feedback on what happened. I can't do that. I've got three kids to chase around.

AF: Anything else you look for?

Chris: For the hell of it, we did that enhance TV on Monday Night Football. That was pretty cool. They throw all the stats on you as the game's going. Curtis Martin gains 20 yards and it gives you an immediate update on how he's doing, what he did last week. They give you a picture of him, down below they've got a graph of the football field and then Xs and Os of the players and you can just watch where they are on the field. They shoot you all kinds of bits of information. They have a trivia contest between almost each play. You have a score there. I'd do it again if I'm really bored.

AF: What future Internet development do you most look forward to?

Chris: Just getting immediate results for fantasy football. Watching games on the computer. I suppose if you're not at home and you can't pick it up.

AF: Have you become a bigger sports fan since using the Internet?

Chris: To some degree, yeah. Especially with pro football because we're in the middle of nowhere and there's not a team to be loyal to, really.

AF: How would you rate yourself on a Nethead Scale 1 to 10?

Chris: Ummm 5. No, actually like a 4. No, 3 1/2. Three and 3/4. That's my final answer.

JIMBO

Name: Jimbo.
Age: 32.
Marital status: Single.
Occupation: Computer programmer.
Work hours: 8 to 5.
Computer: Toshiba laptop.
Provider: Company dial-up network.
No. of e-mail accounts: Two.
Browser: Internet Explorer.
Favorite sports: 1. Pro baseball. 2. Golf. 3. College football.
Favorite teams: Mets, Huskers, Vikings.

AF: How often are you on the Internet?

Jimbo: Probably 21/2 hours a day.

AF: How much of that is viewing sports-related material?

Jimbo: I'd say 45 minutes. It all goes back to what sports are on. I'm not on the Internet on a Saturday, but during the week I'll check baseball scores and I'll also check things like the cnn/si college football page. Trev Alberts is pretty good.

AF: How do you use the Internet when it comes to sports?

Jimbo: The first one I go to is cnn/si.com, by far heads above the rest. I don't like espn.com because they have too many things you have to subscribe to and pay. I don't like sifting through and seeing what articles I can and can't read. But I guess it all depends on what sport I'm watching. Like last week, I did go to espn.com because I downloaded the league championship series between the Mets and the Braves.

AF: So what are you looking for?

Jimbo: Articles. Then the columnists. Feedback, too. Like when Jim Gray stuck his foot in his mouth with the Pete Rose interview. I'll go read the comments about that and see what people are saying about it.

AF: What about stats?

Jim: Very rarely. I'm not a stats man. But I was a rotisserie league geek and I did download stats then, but I'm not in that anymore.

AF: Have you become a bigger sports fan since using the Internet?

Jimbo: I wouldn't say bigger. More informed. For sure. Way more informed. If you read the World-Herald you don't get about the West Coast because everything's late.

AF: How did you used to spend this time you now use for the Internet?

Jimbo: (big laughs). It's definitely not good to have the Internet at your place of employment. When I was a manager I tried to get rid of the Internet for people because I knew what I did. It takes away from work-related items.

AF: What future Internet development do you most look forward to?

Jimbo: I would have to say live broadcasts. If you've ever seen it, you can tell it's in its infancy stage. It's not refined. You don't get a clear picture and you have to have a fast computer.

AF: What sports bookmarks do you have?

Jimbo: Husker football links, USA Today

KAZE

Name: Jeff K.
Buds call him: Kaze.
Age: 29
Marital status: Married. "It's all official now."
Occupation: Production manager.
Work hours: 1 p.m. to 11 p.m..
Computer: Packard Bell 586 Pentium
Provider: Global Lynx, a local provider.
Browser: Internet Explorer.
No. of e-mail accounts: Two.
Favorite sports: 1. College football. 2. Pro football. 3. Pro baseball; 4. College baseball.
Favorite teams: Huskers, Miami, Yankees.
Hours a week watching sports on TV: 12 to 14.

AF: How often are you on the Internet?

Kaze: Two.

AF: How much of that is viewing sports-related material?

Kaze: I'd say one hour a day.

AF: How many bookmarks do you have?

Kaze: I bet 75 or 80.

AF: Are you serious? What's wrong with you?

Kaze: I save them all as things that only I would know so Jenny [his wife] has no idea what they are. You know, for porn.

AF: How many bookmarks are sports-related.

Kaze: Fifteen. The rest are production/manufacturing and work-related.

AF: What sports information are you looking for on the Internet?

Kaze: Scores. Highlights. If there's any chats I like to take part in it's fun. But I just do it to make fun of people who are stupid. Cut-downs, usually.

AF: What sites do you visit a lot?

Kaze: Nebraska Game and Parks.

AF: Chat rooms?

Kaze: No.

AF: Polls?

Kaze: Yes.

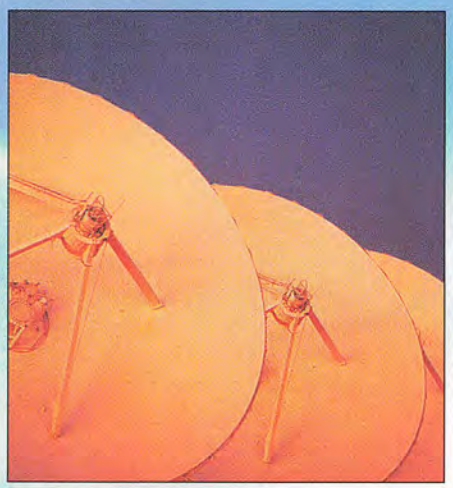
AF: What future Internet development do you most look forward to?

Kaze: Live feeds from games that wouldn't necessarily be televised. You could do almost a pay per view through your computer.

AF: Have you become a bigger sports fan since using the Internet?

Kaze: I don't know about a bigger fan, but certainly a more informed fan.

Websites photos: www.espn.com, www.bcs.com, www.huskerwebcast.com, www.omaha.com.



Lost in Cyberspace

Who's writing all that sports news on the Internet? It could just be me

By Andy Nordmeier

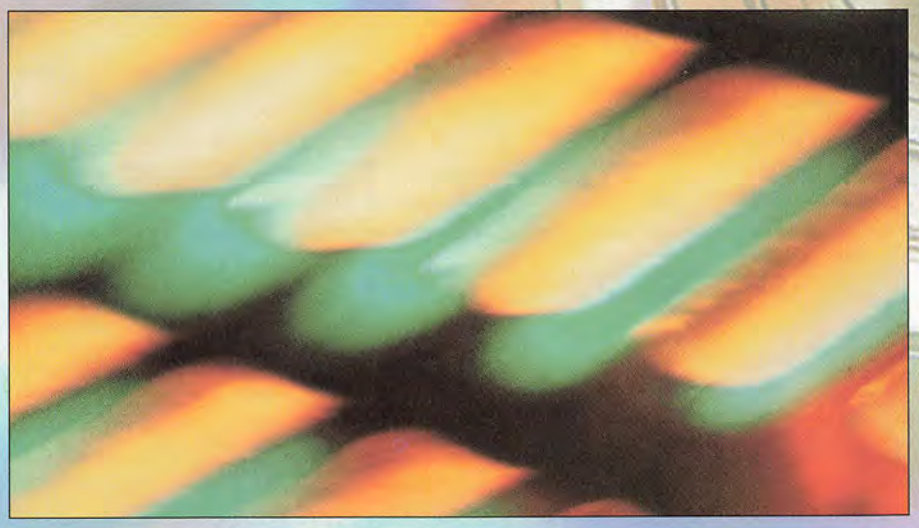
Online journalism is a lot like drag racing, without the jump suits and crash helmets. Everyone wants to be first. Those who succeed roar to glory. The competition crashes and burns.

I've been an online journalist since 1997 and had my share of both. The ups are that the online medium is a great way for young journalists like me to get the proverbial "foot in the door" and reporters can build experience quickly. On the Internet, there are opportunities everywhere. The downs are when free agent reporters looking for experience at every turn take on too much and wind up overburdening themselves trying to provide content to multiple web sites. Most of them require exclusive content. Those two words, "exclusive content," mean you can't just write one story and send it off to four different groups with a click of the mouse. Unfortunately.

The method of reporting online can also be drastically different. That's sometimes good, sometimes bad. Most reporters can't sit at home, watch a game in the Barcalounger with their feet up and then write about it afterward. I can.

And often have to. I've worked for web sites that ask me to report on events any way I can see them ... and not necessarily live, either. How else do you think one person can write about two NBA playoff series and two NHL playoff series happening on the same night, with each of the games happening in different cities? Think about that next time you're reading about a game online. Your "inside" reporter may have seen the game the same way you did. On TV.

That's not always true. There are a majority of sites that like to have reporters at events. It makes a difference in being able to capture the emotion and feeling of a game and to get those quotes directly from the source afterward. It's just not the same on a 27-inch screen when you're stretched out on the couch. Even if it is infinitely more comfortable.



Often, though, many web sites have no choice. Online reporters have one disadvantage and that is getting credentialed, recognized as "legitimate" members of the media. For many local Omaha sporting events, I find getting credentialed to not be that difficult. The College World Series was a different matter. I, as well as several other online journalists, were denied credentials by the NCAA due to a contract they have with a web site of their own.

The Internet either doesn't have the juice yet, or the host wants to keep the coverage exclusive to its own web site. The situation repeats itself in other cities across the country as some of my colleagues in Austin, Texas, couldn't get credentialed to University of Texas football due to a contract that school has. That's the case for many Division I colleges, as well. If your school has its own "official" web site, why create competition for yourself?

To be fair, keep in mind that with so many sites out there credibility also becomes an issue. Everybody has a home page on the Internet these days. Sure, everyone would think that an ESPN.com or CNNSI.com are reputable, but what about Pete's Pittsburgh Penguins Page? Does it get a spot in the press box?

The larger web sites have an army of reporters at their disposal, but some of the smaller ones may have a staff of 10 or less and try to cover the same amount of material. That makes a reporter's task even more difficult.

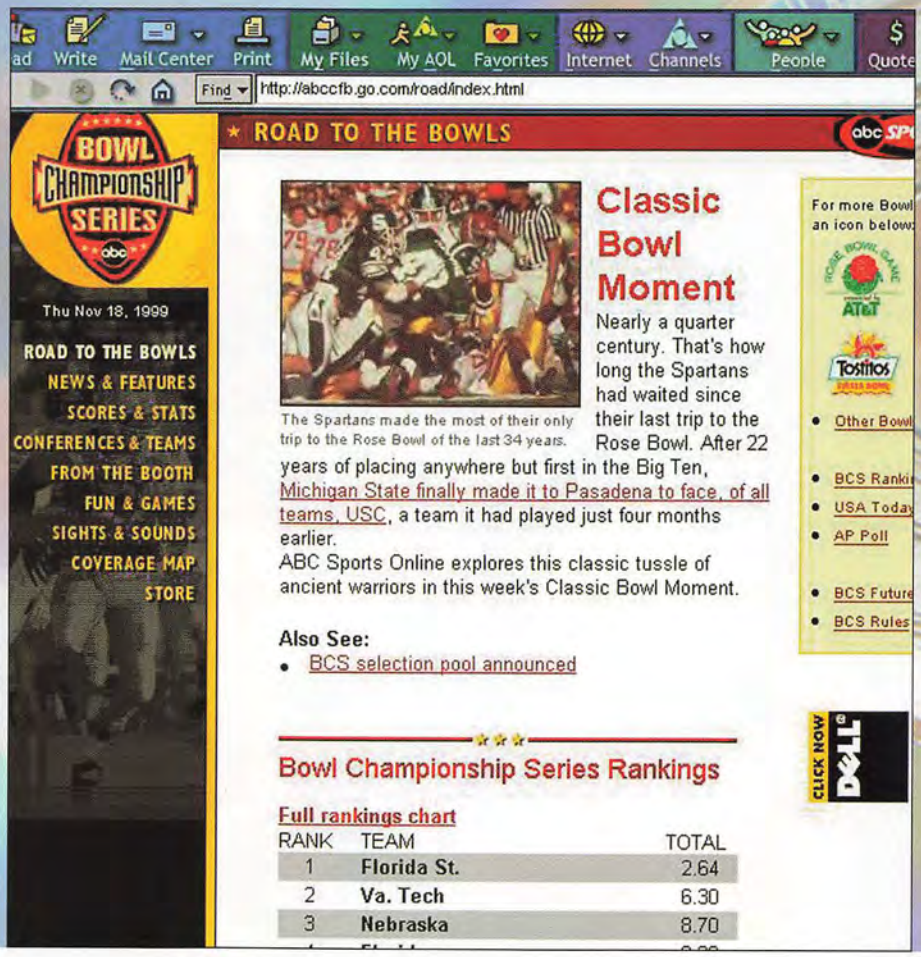
With the larger sites, there might be few reporters on the NFL itself and that's all they do. On a smaller site, one reporter may wind up following three or four conferences, yes conferences, and still have to pull double duty on basketball or hockey in the fall as well. Of course, a perk of doing all this writing is knowing so much useless sports trivia that it boggles people's minds. Who was the third leading scorer on Bowling Green's hockey squad last year? Go on, try me!

Being an online writer I also have discovered why most of us who do this are called free-lancers. (Hint: It has to do with the word "free.") Of all the sites I have worked for, only one paid me. One out of four! The others I work for simply for experience, which always helps in the job market and to build a portfolio.

On the whole, online journalism is a competitive medium where perhaps 10 or 20 or more outlets might be fighting to break a story all at the same time. That means something with instantaneous publication. The more traditional forms of media can't match the turn around. There is no 5 o'clock news on the Internet; there are no presses to roll. When it's out there, it's out there. If you're first, you're first. And if you're not, you're last.

I would write more, but another game has just ended and the drag race is revving up again. Time to brush off the crums, sit up in the Barcalounger and get to work. Ladies and gentlemen, start your typing.⌖ NSA

Omaha journalist Andy Nordmeier covers UNO hockey and the CCHA for US College Hockey Online, as well as juggling several other free-lance Internet assignments for a handful of web sites. He is also the radio color voice of the Omaha Lancers. If this article makes it to NSA's site, we may or may not pay him.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SCORES & STATS
CONFERENCES & TEAMS
FROM THE BOOTH
FUN & GAMES
SIGHTS & SOUNDS
COVERAGE MAP
STORE
★ ROAD TO THE BOWLS
Classic Bowl Moment
The Spartans made the most of their only trip to the Rose Bowl of the last 34 years.
Nearly a quarter century. That's how long the Spartans had waited since their last trip to the Rose Bowl. After 22 years of placing anywhere but first in the Big Ten, Michigan State finally made it to Pasadena to face, of all teams, USC, a team it had played just four months earlier.
ABC Sports Online explores this classic tussle of ancient warriors in this week's Classic Bowl Moment.
Also See:
• BCS selection pool announced
Bowl Championship Series Rankings
Full rankings chart
RANK TEAM TOTAL
1 Florida St. 2.64
2 Va. Tech 6.30
3 Nebraska 8.70
For more Bowl
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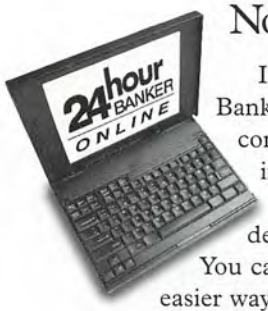

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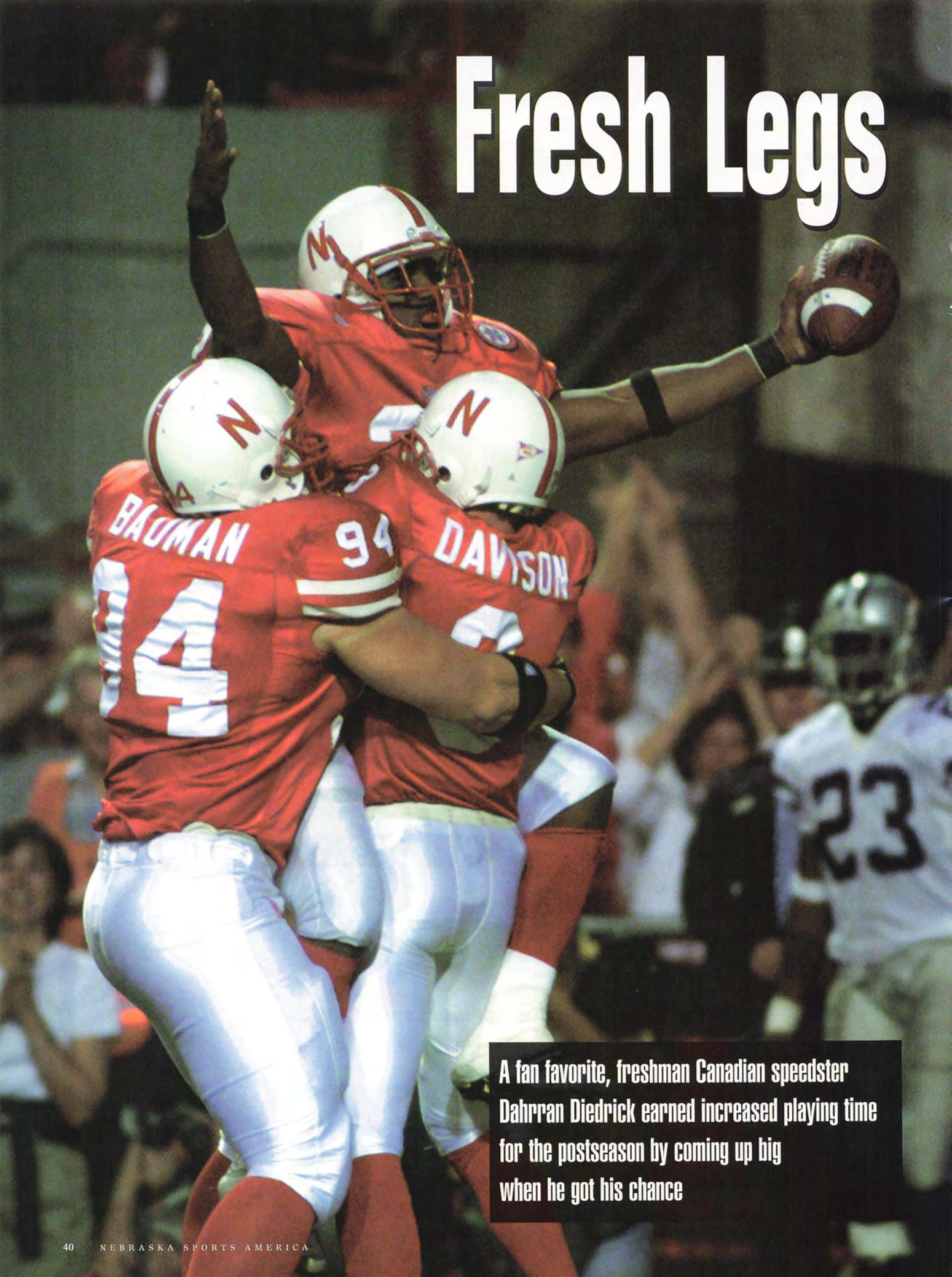


A fan favorite, freshman Canadian speedster Dahrran Diedrick earned increased playing time for the postseason by coming up big when he got his chance

by Kalani Simpson

The fans wanted to know and so on radio shows and in coffee shops and on street corners they asked. When is Dahrran Diedrick going to play? Is he going to start to get the ball more? Why the heck isn't he in there? He looks pretty good, don't you think?

Coaches and media tend to politely write off such uninformed suggestions. The fans said such things because, mainly, nobody's more of a fan favorite than the proverbial backup quarterback. (Or, in the state of Nebraska, the backup I-back.) We love him! Know why? Because the grass is always greener ... and he's the only guy who hasn't played enough to screw up yet. Everybody looks good from the bench.

Turns out, though, the fans got their wish. And maybe they know a little more than we give them credit for.

Diedrick started to make appearances as the season went on. Maybe because it sometimes looks as if Nebraska coaches seem to feature Correll Buckhalter only if they have no other choice. And Diedrick was giving them a choice. Additionally, Buckhalter's opposite in the coaches' eyes, favorite Dan Alexander, the starter, wasn't panning out either. Alexander looked good in the box score, sure. But he wasn't always as good as his numbers. He stumbled. He fumbled.

Between the two, and other members of Nebraska's offense, the ball was starting to end up on the ground a lot. More and more so, early and often.

And so, the questions increased. The fumbles increased. Diedrick played more. And then he got his big chance.

It happened in the Kansas State game. The big one. For the second week in a row, Alexander fumbled on the very first play. Frank Solich, as much as he liked Alexander, was tired of this. Dan was done. He never got off the bench again that day.

(They said later Alexander had a bad hamstring, and that's why he saw action only that one play. You make the call.)

There was no other choice. In came Buckhalter. He fought for extra yardage. He fumbled.

Diedrick's backers statewide started screaming at their television sets.

The freshman was on the sideline, not knowing what to expect. They told him to get in there. He knew right away how important this was.

"You've got to take advantage of every chance you *get*," he said.

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

Diedrick grabbed his helmet and ran into the game.

Up the middle for five yards. Over left end for two. A fumble on an option pitch from quarterback Eric Crouch — but Diedrick scooped it up in stride and dove forward nearly for a first down. Whew!

Fumbles had banished his two predecessors, but Diedrick had kept possession, and the Huskers would go on to score for a 16-0 lead on the No. 5 team in the country.

"I was just trying not to think about not fumbling," he said later.

He did fine. Fourteen carries for 93 yards, 6.6 per carry and a 46-yard breakway touchdown in the fourth quarter. He sprinted free on the long run, taking advantage of brilliant blocking, and kicked into a gallop at the one-yard line in anticipation of possibly having to jump over the last potential tackler. After the game, he smiled.

"I just ran for my life," he explained.

Husker fans smiled too. It looked as if their team had finally found a No. 1 guy. (Just as it looked when Buckhalter ran loose at Missouri before that, or Alexander finally looking good against Texas A&M.) And this time, it was the people's choice. The third-team runner was as good as they had been telling everyone after all.

Afterward, Solich quickly went into damage control. "We're going to have to have Dan," he said. "We're going to have to have Correll, we're going to have to have Dahrran to get this thing finished out right. We will have to count on all three of them." Crushed spirits don't help a team in the quest for a Big 12 title. "The thing I hope has not happened is that Dan and Correll are not so discouraged that they have a hard time bouncing back."

Later, the story became that Alexander had been injured more than benched, and so the junior's nightmare with injuries continues. But at the postgame podium, Solich, uncomfortably, didn't dodge the facts: "We felt we needed a change in that point in time."

After the game, fullback Willie Miller, Alexander's friend and roommate, was asked whether a gridiron game of musical chairs was going on in the position behind him. Miller didn't agree. "We've definitely got a ranking order of how it goes," Miller said. But he allowed that that's before the game. Once the Huskers take the field, anything can happen. And after two quick turnovers against Kansas State, it did.

Solich clearly doesn't like juggling players, yanking on their emotions and sometimes bruising their psyches in the process. He'd done it early with the quarterbacks and now here it was happening all over again with his runners. "Mind games can be a tough thing for a player," he said tiredly, perhaps from experience. "They can be a tough thing for a coach." Against Kansas State, in the heat of the moment in a must-win game, he thought there had been no choice.

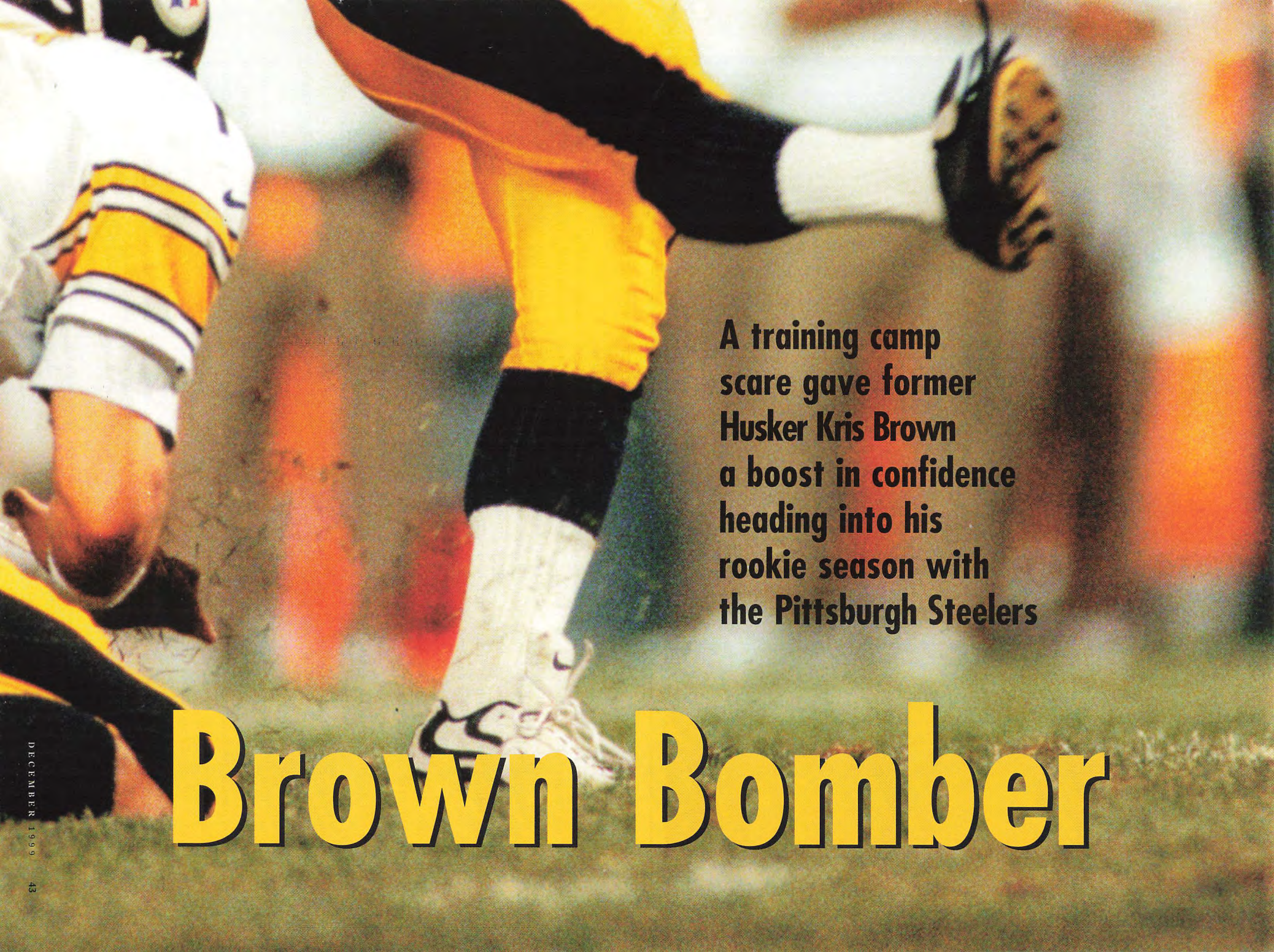
Diedrick was also in a somewhat uncomfortable position. Everyone wanted to play, and now here he was having a big night almost at the expense of the two backs with starting experience. Buckhalter is his roommate, and yet his success came as the result of Alexander and Buckhalter's lowest moments of the season. He was asked if the running backs were close. "The two guys ahead of me are really close to each other," he answered. Perhaps, he said, he hoped he was moving closer to them.

But when he stopped and reflected on his breakout game, he reacted with a satisfied smile. He was still a freshman, he was still learning, he said. But he had done the only thing you can ask: He had come through for the team when called upon.

"I feel really good," he said. "My mom's here to watch me play." He hadn't known if she'd see him play in the fourth quarter, or even at all. And after coming all the way from Canada, Mom saw her boy score a touchdown for the Huskers.

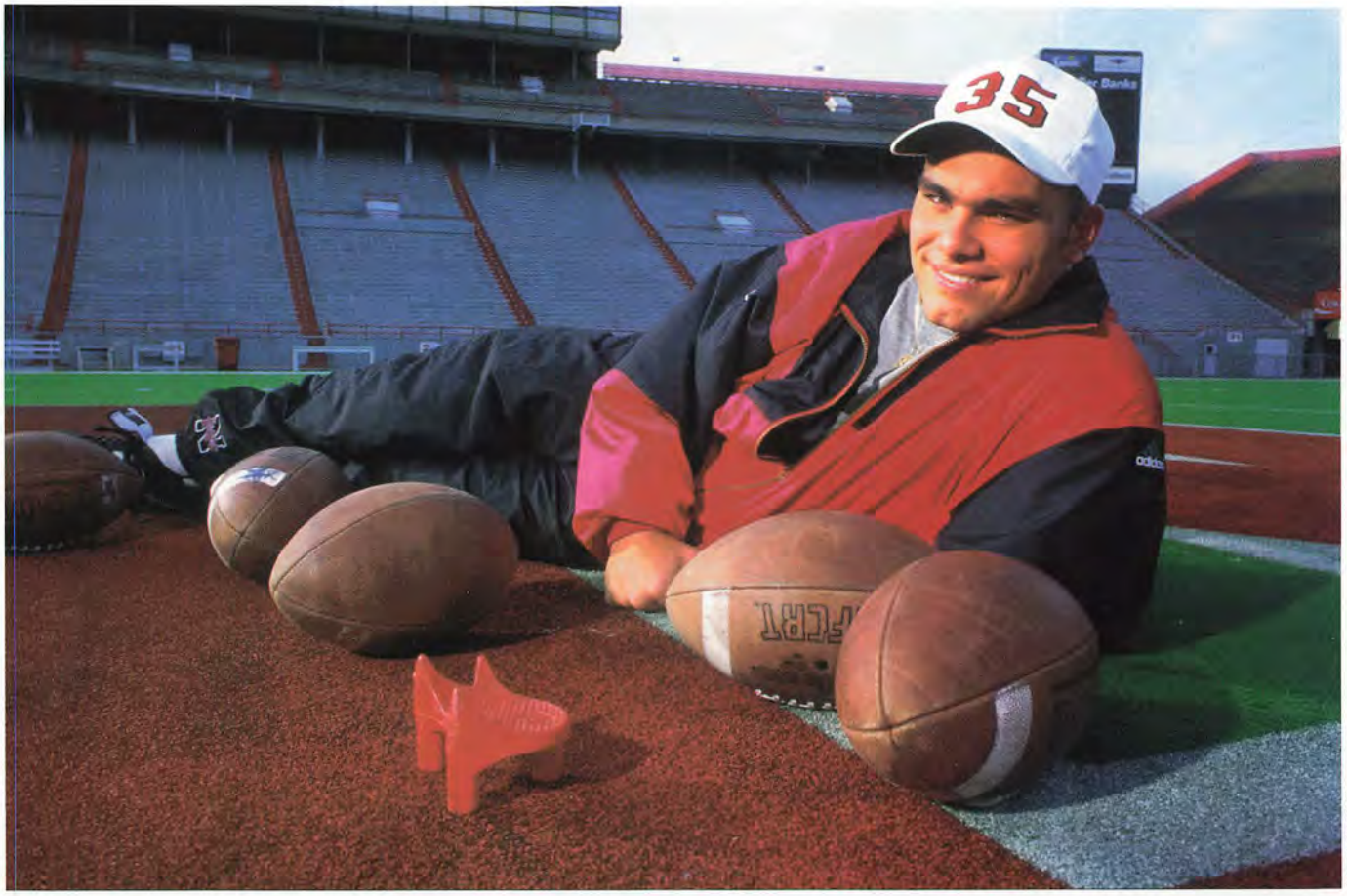
He doesn't know if he'll get an increased role this postseason. But he's there, willing and waiting for his chance. Just ask the talk show callers. They knew all along. ❖ NSA

PHOTO BY MIKE FABUS/PITTSBURGH STEELERS



A training camp scare gave former Husker Kris Brown a boost in confidence heading into his rookie season with the Pittsburgh Steelers

Brown Bomber



NSA FILE PHOTO

By Kalani Simpson

Brown was confident as a Husker freshman on his way to two national titles, but later struggles would help season him for life in the pro ranks.

It had just been a bad day, that's all. That nightmare of a training camp scrimmage with the Washington Redskins. Or at least that's what former Husker turned Pittsburgh Steeler Kris Brown kept telling himself. But in training camp, you need a story every day, and after watching that day's performance against the Redskins, the media had found one: Was the rookie kicker, an actual draft choice for crying out loud, a bust?

Just a bad day, Brown said to himself, Just a bad day.

But then the needle tore off that broken record with a *voooop!*

"Hey dude," Brown's two-a-days roommate, punter Josh Miller popped in. And then he uttered the words that send chills down every rookie professional athlete's spine: "Coach wants to talk to you."

That's not something you want to hear after a bad day.

No, Brown said, this was some kind of joke. Coach did not want to see him. Miller insisted he did.

This was Coach Bill Cowher, an emotional big-jawed raving maniac so intimidating that a Sports Illustrated headline once dubbed him "The Face." Cowher is such a tough guy that he does Dr. Pepper commercials poking fun at his rough image, and it's still scary.

Brown didn't want to go. Miller told him he'd better.

So Brown did what anybody would have done: He tiptoed out of the room, sidling toward the coach's makeshift office in the Steelers' dorm, half moving forward and half hanging back, trying hard to look inconspicuous, still hoping Miller would call off the prank. So it was true? Was this it? Is this how he was going out?

"I was scared at first," he said. Would Cowher yell at him? Cut him? Kill him?

He knew the reality of professional football. "Every time I've talked to him," Nebraska kickers coach Dan Young said, "he's said, 'Well it looks like I made it through another week.'"

"You can't think about that stuff," Brown said. "I realize I'm a decision away from not having a job, but..." But when he saw Cowher, he thought about it.

Cowher just happened to be walking through the same hallway, and spotted Brown trying to blend into the wall. "Come here," he said.

Dah dah dummmmm....

"Those thoughts creep into your mind," Brown said. "Especially as a rookie."

Cowher sat him down. The day before had not gone well. Tomorrow, the Steelers were bringing in legendary former NFL kicker Matt Bahr, Cowher said. Bahr would talk to him, watch him kick, work with him. Get the kinks out. So that Kris Brown could be a better kicker for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

"Yesterday was yesterday," Cowher told him. "Just forget about it."

Brown walked out of the room much differently than he had walked in. Renewed confidence soared through him.

"That's something I'll always remember," he said. "I'm very thankful to the Steelers that they were committed to doing this. They could have easily went the other way.

"It felt good."

And Brown hasn't looked back since. He's an NFL record holder for most consecutive field goals made by a rookie. He

booted a 51-yarder on Monday Night Football. Brown is loving life, he said. Living a dream. He and his wife bought a house in Pittsburgh. "I'm just having a good time," he said. "I'm having fun."

And Cowher? No problem.

"He's a very intense person," Brown said. "That's kind of an understatement. But I realize now my expectations aren't any less than his are."

A shot of confidence from the big man also gave Brown a boost heading into the season, a new lease on life. "He thought going into the very last week he still might get cut," Young said. "I guess there was this assistant coach there who seemed like he just hated kickers. They were always getting on him pretty good."

It's not as glamorous as he thought it would be. The pro atmosphere is different, Brown said. They pay you, and they want their money's worth. But he doesn't begrudge a little grumbling from the coaches, even if a few are the complete opposite of his understated old mentor, Young.

"This is your job," he said. "But the coaches have an even harder job, if you think about it. They're really on the line.

"The caliber of athletes that play at this level is unbelievable. Everybody on these teams was a Grant Wistrom-type player."

Young said Brown told him he was surprised that the pros were less of a team atmosphere than football was at Nebraska. Brown said he still thinks of football as the game he grew up playing, but not everyone is that way anymore.

"I don't really know what others have in their minds," he said. "Some play because they love the game, some guys play because they get a big check every two weeks."

It was a world he almost didn't join. Early in his Husker career, Brown was phenomenal. But at its twilight, he almost looked like a different player. He went from a guaranteed pro in his first three years to a marginal prospect in his final one. "He still had a good year for us," as a senior, Young said. "It just wasn't the year Kris Brown had in mind."

"Last year there was a lot of adversity for the whole team," Brown said. But a year later, he could look back and admit that he had struggled. "I was personally going through some things physically, and," he added, "mentally as well."

It happens, Young said, even to the best of them. You miss, you question yourself, you question yourself, you miss again. And so on. And so on. "Kicking is a lot of confidence," the coach said.

"The thing that hurt me more than anything," Brown said, "was losing (holder) Frankie London when he broke his leg."

But Brown fought through it. He was better than that. Young knew it. Brown knew it. Turns out, the Steelers knew it too.

"He's got an air of confidence about him," Young said. "He's got a little moxie about him."

That's why he got his second chance. Pittsburgh saw something in him. He's tough. Bill Cowher's kind of guy. ✦ NSA

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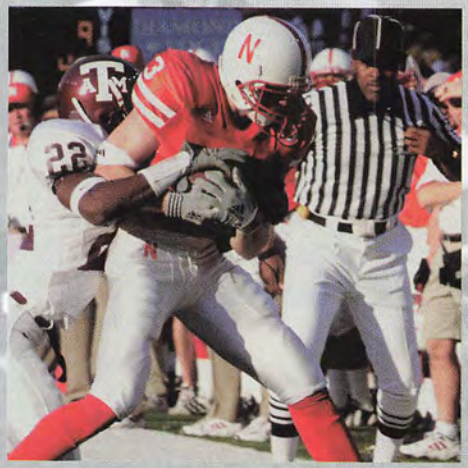
husker Highlights

Nebraska 41
Kansas St. 15

Mike Brown did it all again, causing and recovering this Adam Helm fumble. And Eric Crouch had a huge game too. But Dahrran Diedrick (30) created perhaps the most excitement with his clutch performance. K-State's great defensive trio of Mark Simoneau (42), Jarrod Cooper (40) and Darren Howard tackled Willie Miller here, but just couldn't stop the Huskers.
Photos by Eric Francs

husker Highlights

Nebraska 37
Texas A&M 0



Willie Miller found himself on the defensive, breaking up a would-be interception. And Matt Davison grabbed opportunity when it came his way. But the Blackshirts took center stage again: Steve Warren sacking, Ralph Brown smacking and Loran Kaiser hustling after a loose ball.

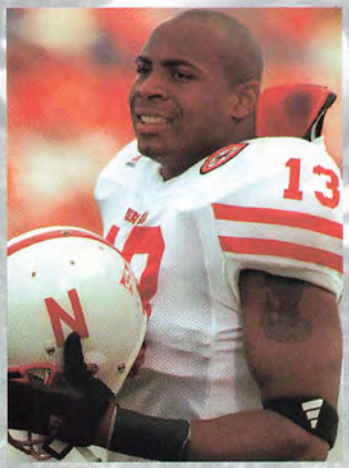
Photos by Eric Francis and Bob Berry

husker Highlights

Nebraska 24
Kansas 17

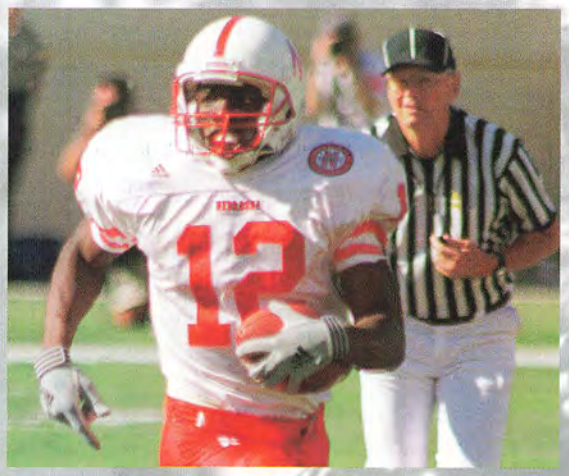
Once again, Dan Alexander and the Huskers had trouble with fumbles. And tough Jayhawk defense against Huskers like Eric Crouch and Dahrran Diedrick had Nebraska upside down early. But the Blackshirt defense, led by Eric Johnson, Kyle Vanden Bosch and Carlos Polk (13) helped Nebraska come back for a thrilling win.

Photos by Eric Francis and Bob Berry

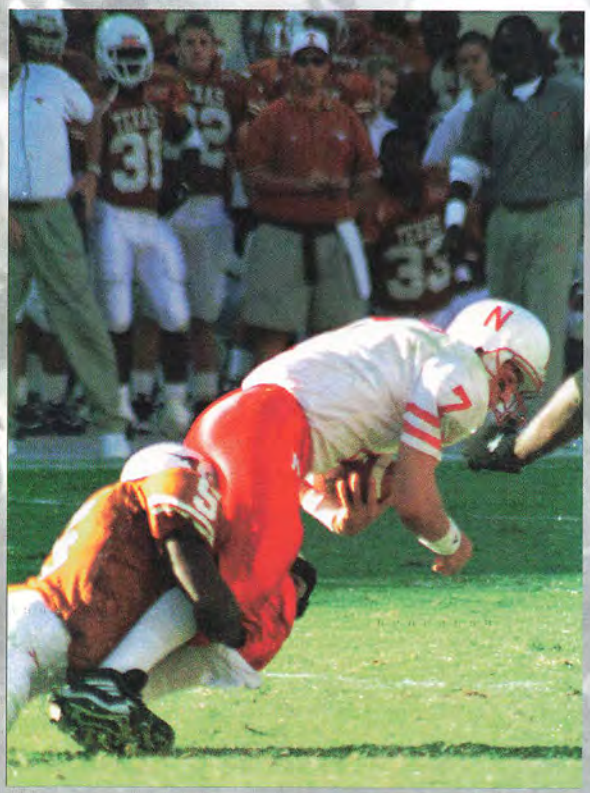


husker Highlights

Texas 24
Nebraska 20



Photos by Horns Illustrated



Tight end Tracey Wistrom (87) had another big game. Bobby Newcombe and Eric Crouch provided offensive excitement. But in the end, the Texas defense came away with the turnovers it needed to steal the momentum, and Major Applewhite came back, hit Mike Jones (81), who broke three Nebraska tackles for the winning touchdown. Photos by Horns Illustrated

Home Away from Home

In Washington, like other parts of the country, displaced Husker fans form weekly little pockets of Big Red

If Memorial Stadium becomes Nebraska's third largest city on game day Saturdays, than the Lucky 7 Saloon, on game day Saturdays, becomes the state's westernmost burg.

All the way in Kirkland, Wash.

The residents of Henry, Neb., on the Wyoming border in Scotts Bluff County, may point out here that they are actually Nebraska's most western town. And being that they are actually located within state boundaries they have a point. But remember, these are game-day Saturdays. And if Memorial Stadium can claim city status just by bringing a lot of Husker fans together, well then, in that spirit, why not?

On Oct. 23 it was Lucky 7, Neb., population 250.

It's no Memorial Stadium. It's no Henry (pop. 145). But for Washington, which is a long way from Nebraska, it's a pretty good mix of both.

The red-clad crowd that converges every Saturday on the Lucky 7 is part of a phenomenon that can be found in pockets, large or small, throughout the country: "Husker Watch Parties." The premise is simple. Get a number of Husker fans together, find a place where they can congregate weekly and see their team play on TV. Usually it's a familiar sports bar, where displaced Husker fans are sure of following their team from afar, while the establishment gets a guaranteed crowd.

It's a win-win situation, said Lucky 7 owner Tony Joyce, who has been hosting Cornhuskers at his place for a few years now.

"I happened to think it was a great idea," he said, when the UNL alumni group Washington Cornhuskers Puget Sound Chapter came to him. He's a service-oriented kind of guy, and besides, "they're such nice people."

His biggest Husker crowd ever was for this year's Texas game, when attendance swelled to about 250. "It was pretty tight," said club president Bob Paine good-naturedly. Usually the Washington Cornhuskers, and other Husker fans who happen to be in the area, provide the Lucky 7 with somewhere between 70 and 150-something customers, depending on the game. Word is spread by the club in newspaper ads, on the Internet, through the alumni association and on NU sports radio broadcasts, which the Washington Cornhuskers sponsor on two local stations.

And some people just know, if you follow Nebraska, you can watch the game every Saturday at Lucky 7. Guaranteed. The satellite dish is tuned in and there'll be lots of folks in red rooting for the Huskers.

"If the game is broadcast, yeah, we're having a get together," Paine said.

See you at the game. Just like

Memorial Stadium. "These people," said member Irene Bjorklund, "are there early. It's unbelievable."

It's nice for Joyce. In Husker fans he sees nice friends, nice crowds, nice business. They wear red, but they carry a good chunk of green.

"They're a great crowd," he said. "They're very supportive, never hard on the opposition. That's nice, because last week we had about 50 Texas fans in here and everyone got along great."

That doesn't mean, Joyce said, that game day at his place isn't a lot of fun.

"They're loud," he said. "Very, very loud."

"It's very upbeat, very upbeat," Paine said. "We have a pretty lively crowd, and it's a good mixture. I'm in my 60s. We have people in their 70s and kids right out of school."

And they're all really, really, really pulling for Nebraska. "Boisterous," Paine said. "Rowdy." Who could blame them? But even with tense outings against Texas and Kansas recently, they've always been polite about it. "Oh yes," Paine said. "Nobody's done any bodily damage to the bad calls we've seen."

"They do an excellent job," Joyce said. "Our servers love having them here."

The entire escapade is organized by the Washington Cornhuskers. They set up the radio broadcasts. They watch the Frank Solich Show before every game. This winter, Tom Osborne is traveling to speak at their Founder's Day celebration. They try to use the watch parties to turn casual Husker fans into members. A UNL letterman's jacket drawing has helped attract about 10 new members a game, Bjorklund said.

What about Joyce, the host — have they turned him into a Husker fan?

"I consider myself politically correct," he said. "Saturday, I wear red. Sunday, I wear green, because we have Green Bay in here as well."

That's OK. Joyce is only a once a week member, but you don't have to be a Husker fan to take part in the fun. After all, the Huskers are playing somebody every week and they have fans too. "They may be a little happier than we are with the outcome sometimes," Paine said. "But we always say, You're welcome back."

That's the part of the Husker watch parties that Joyce likes best. "The fact of the matter is," the New York native said, "after these years I really consider some of these people to be my good friends. And I hope they feel the same way."

That's the magic of game day Saturdays. It turns any gathering of fans, whether Memorial Stadium or the Lucky 7 Saloon, into a community.

Of course, wearing red helps. ❖ NSA

A Husker Fan in Colorado

*In the spirit of fans who follow the Huskers from afar, NSA's Colorado contributor **Jay Brady** offers his perspective of being a Nebraska fan in a state where interstate trash talk has become an annual tradition during college football season.*

Seems those Buffaloes just can't see red without going into a tailspin.

We Cornhusker fans living in Colorado stifle a grin and hide a smile as the talk shows on radio and the newspaper columnists declare open season year around on "Big Red." We transplanted Nebraskans can't wait for the end of November so the Husker bashers can end their misery for another year. And we have to hear the "What ifs" and "if onlys" surrounding another football season for Nebraska and Colorado. After all, only on rare exceptions have the Buffalo fans remained loyal to their team by late November. They have tasted defeat often enough that their interests turn to the ski slopes or the Denver Broncos long before the Nebraska game, but a few diehards hang in there hoping somehow the Buffaloes will prevail.

It doesn't soften their dislike of Nebraska that most of our games are televised in the land where the mountains block the view and all "Big Red" games are broadcast on radio sponsored by Coloradans For Nebraska.

What these bashers don't understand is that Nebraska football is a tradition, and just because some of us moved across the state line, our affection remains steadfast. While the red "N" proudly flies in more than a few Colorado households, the ever hopeful, but permanently dejected Buffalo fans put their tail between their legs many a Thanksgiving weekend, and no doubt, secretly give thanks they don't have to tangle with the Huskers again for another year. ❖ NSA

live life with lifeplus!

I know what you are probably thinking: "One more article telling me to eat right and exercise." Right?

Yeah, you're right, but take a few minutes anyway to read it. I'M NOT A DOCTOR nor do I have initials behind my name showing that I have a tremendous education. I'm just like most of you, working hard in a fast-paced society. Unfortunately, our cell phone, www.notimetootired.com, e-mail lifestyles share time with pollution, smoking, second-hand smoke, pesticides, fried and processed foods, preservatives and harmful drinking water. In fact, it has been said that if you live in a city of much size today (Omaha or Lincoln), your water supply may have been through someone else's toilet at least once.

To add to this, even our own bodies produce highly reactive toxins- called "free radicals"- as a by-product of how are body uses oxygen. Researchers even say that if you spend a minimum of 30 minutes per day commuting to work, you expose yourself to harmful car emissions. The air coming into your car to keep it cool or warm is coming from the tailpipe in front of you.

The bottom line is: free radicals and toxins damage the cells in our body which researchers say can cause premature aging, allergies, asthma, arthritis, capillary deterioration, heart disease, cancers, chronic fatigue and a host of other diseases and problems.

Natural occurring antioxidants (free radical scavengers) in our diet protect us from excess damage from free radicals and toxins. These antioxidants that our body needs to protect us from these radicals and toxins are contained naturally in fruits and vegetables, which is why we consume the recommended five to nine servings per day. NOT! And even if you did, the Nutrition Review Journal reported that it is IMPOSSIBLE to obtain sufficient nutrients from our modern day food supply. Many of the fruits and vegetables on our grocery store shelves have been genetically engineered to look pretty and have an extended life rather than to improve nutritional value. Besides, most of us no not have the proper amount of digestive enzymes in our system to process the food we eat anyway. But that's another story.

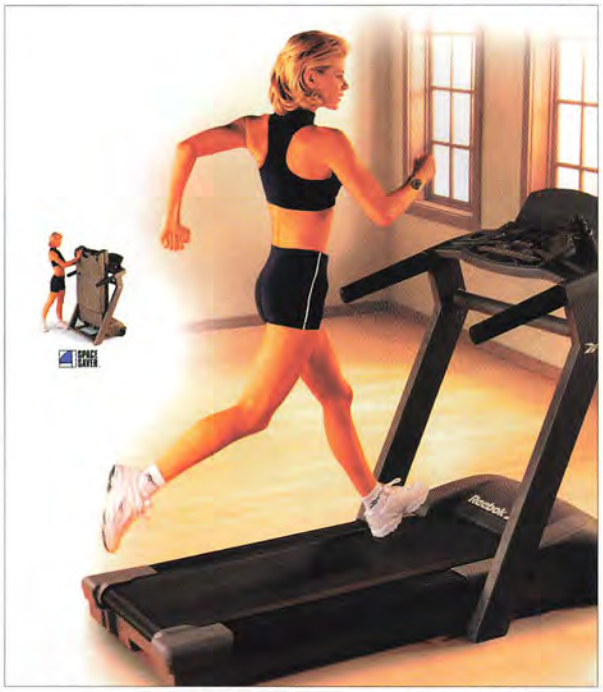
They keep building hospitals or adding on wings to hospitals. Is this telling us that our society is getting healthier or sicker? There will always be enough people to keep our doctors in business but you don't have to be one of them! If you and your family are not eating enough fruits and vegetables and if your diet does not contain the amount of fiber recommended by expert organizations like the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute, you should consider supplementing your diet.

If you are exposed to the lifestyle we discussed, then you are a candidate for supplementation. If you want the TOTAL ELIMINATION of free radicals and their damaging effects then you should consider using products from a company called LifePlus™, including proanthenols and sustanese.

Proanthenols contain Oligomeric ProanthoCyandins (OPCs) which are natural health supporting compounds found in the fibrous parts of fruits and vegetables and are destroyed by cooking or processing. OPC's are probably the most versatile nutrients ever discovered. They are possibly the MOST ACTIVE FREE RADICAL SCAVENGING ANTIOXIDANTS KNOWN. Sustanese is a product that supplies the enzymes to assist the digestion of foods in both the stomach and the intestines to ensure our bodies absorb the most nutrients available.

If you're like myself and have children and want to live a long and healthy life, you have no choice but to exercise and eat right. You can either be proactive or reactive with your health. Doctors are there to help heal you when needed, but it is up to you to take care of your own health. If you would like more information on these and other LifePlus™ products or would like to order on-line, go to www.lifeplus.com and use account #678353. You can also call us at Peak Performance at 1-800-390-4786 or, in Omaha, at 398-9807- ask for Mike Ewoldt. Talk to your doctor, but get started today!

—Jim Ewoldt, Co-Owner of Peak Performance, Inc



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STAR CITY *Sports*

Glance skyward on a calm, mild day in Lincoln and you may catch a glimpse of a man who has this retirement thing all wrong.

Wrong, that is, if you subscribe to the theory that retiring means slowing down. If anything, Gary Vacin's life has picked up speed since he retired several years ago from a career in education as a college professor. And on certain days when conditions are just right, his life certainly picks up altitude as well.

Vacin is publisher of Star City Sports, a grassroots media success story in Lincoln that proves a good idea in the mind of the right person just might work. And as if starting a local sports publication from his basement six years ago wasn't daring enough, Vacin has taken up flying in a most-unique aircraft as a way to leave his landborne troubles behind.

First, the newspaper. Vacin freely admits he was partially duped into starting his monthly sports publication in Lincoln. Although the idea of doing so was very much his idea, it was a phantom competitor that sparked him to make the move and make it fast.

"I met with a guy in Omaha who had advertised in the paper about helping people start a local sports paper," Vacin recalled about events that took place in late 1992. "For like a $12,000 investment this guy, who was a former newspaper editor he claimed, would show you everything you needed to know. Well, something about it just didn't feel right but I was pretty sure he could find someone in Lincoln to do it.

"I was excited about the concept," he continued, "so I decided to go for it and was basically racing someone that never existed to be first."

Vacin did his homework, meeting with dozens of business owners and asking, "If I do this, will you advertise?" Enough said yes for Vacin to start the publication which is named, literally, "Lincoln's Unnamed Sports Paper." A reader contest generated the eventual name of the publication, "Star City Sports," and the publication has taken root in the star city with current free circulation at around 8,000 copies.

The paper's niche is youth, recreation and participatory sports with pages devoted to areas of interest. Page headers in a recent issue included cycling, wrestling, soccer, golf, equestrian, bowling, outdoors, pool and darts, gaming, fitness and aviation.

Ah yes, aviation. Vacin's other passion is piloting a powered parachute over the skies of Lincoln. He has a new chute which features the Star City Sports logo and Vacin not only enjoys the flying experience himself, but he offers rides for a fee.

"It is a very safe way to fly because it is such a simple way to fly," Vacin said. A powered parachute is a three-wheeled, two-seat kart-like vehicle with a large propeller behind it. Both hang from the rectangular parachute that keeps the whole thing airborne.

But powered parachute rides will likely never replace Star City Sports as Vacin's main vocation. He is constantly looking to the future with his publication. His core publication has also spun off complementary projects like a Lincoln sports directory, a statewide horse industry directory and sports card auctions. Vacin is constantly looking for new opportunities, but he is meticulous in evaluating those he may pursue.

"Obviously, the internet is of interest to me as an area to grow into, but I am cautious about doing something like that and I want to make sure any move we make in that direction is the right move," said Vacin. "I think there is potential to go every other week from our current monthly distribution of Star City Sports at some point, too. But I have learned some lessons about trying to expand and grow too fast, so I don't give any timetable on when that will happen.

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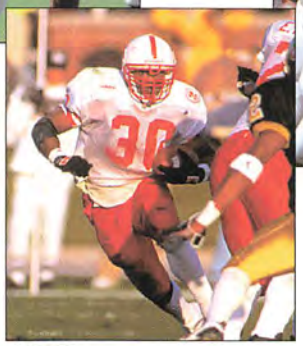

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A Mellienum of Sports Memories

As we approach the much-heralded "New Millenium," one feels almost obligated to attach some cosmic or other-wordly significance to the event. You won't find that here.

Oh, to be sure, the dawn of the next 1,000-year run in the history of things is monumental. But most times, I think, we tend to be more comfortable in defining our life and times in much smaller chunks.

And so it is with sports as well. For if a millenium is merely a 1,000-year mosaic of memories, sports and the people who play them are a part of that, if nothing more than microscopic bits of the whole.

Those little chips of history can run the gamut from the monumental to the minute, but over the course of a thousand years, each one, in the end, winds up to be the same size — microscopic.

Chances are you never heard of Arnie, a big man in his early 30s. We called him names growing up in Shelton, Neb., teased him like smart aleck teen-agers do sometimes. But every day, before football practice, there he was, in his baseball cap and heavy boots and wearing that goofy grin.

Arnie was slow, yes, but there were some things he knew that we didn't. Like how to punt a football, for instance. Because I was the team's punt returner, I used to get out to the field early and let Arnie punt to me.

He would take the football and turn it slowly in his hands, studying it as an archaeologist might peer at a fossil. Then he would look at me, point to the sky and smile. And then he would punt the ball.

The ball came off Arnie's foot with a loud "whoomp" sound and it almost always was a towering spiral, usually more than 50 yards. I would stagger around underneath it, trying to gauge its landing point and failing more often than not. Arnie would laugh and call for the ball to be returned.

Then he would repeat the routine: Study the ball, point to the heavens and boot it, whoomp.

Arnie usually left the field before the rest of the team showed up for practice. He knew he would get teased and catcalled, and so he would wander away.

Once, during a game, I caught a pass along the sideline and was bashed out of bounds by three defenders. My head struck the ground and for a moment or two, I was stunned, dizzy and disoriented. When I looked up, the first face I saw was Arnie's, leaning over the fence that surrounded the field and grinning at me.

"Get up. Get up. Don't lay there," Arnie said. It was the first time I can remember him speaking to me.

During practice the next week, Arnie was not around. He never came back again. I don't know to this day why. Maybe a parent complained. Maybe the coaches thought his presence was affecting our concentration. Or perhaps Arnie just decided that he didn't need the aggravation.

Anyway, he was gone for good.

I hadn't thought about Arnie in years, and I am not quite certain why he came to mind. Maybe it is this New Millenium thing.

We try to attach things to significant historical events in a way that we feel part of it. For many of us, it is impossible to imagine ourselves as actually being an integral part of an ending millenium and an emerging one as well.

But if we think of it in smaller terms, it isn't nearly as difficult.

I've been fortunate enough to see many "important' sports events, where history was made and memories indelibly implanted. But the view here today is that those memories — big and small — are carry the same weight in the context of a milleniuim.

I don't know what ever happened to Arnie, and I am quite certain that he never knew, or cared, what happened to me, either. But I also hope that on certain days at certain times, maybe he remembered slowly turning that football in his hands, pointing to the sky, "whoomping" that ball and watching a skinny sophomore stagger underneath it, reeling like a drunkard.

It is just one microscopic memory in a Milleniuim mosaic. But it's mine.

As we head toward Jan. 1, 2000, try to find yours, too. ✧ NSA

Terry Henion is a longtime sportswriter who has worked for the Omaha World-Herald, Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph and the Hastings Tribune.

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